Grounded Identities

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*Territory and Belonging in the Medieval and Early Modern Middle East and Mediterranean*

*Edited by*

Steve Tamari

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For transliterations, this text uses the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* system. For dating, this text uses the Common Era (CE) (Gregorian calendar) exclusively.

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# Contributors

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# Lands and Loyalties in the Scholarship of Medieval and Early Modern Islamicate History

*Steve Tamari*

A place is not a place by the same name … but sometimes it is. The meaning and significance of places and the names attached to them are, at least in historical time, contingent and transformed according to specific circumstances. This does not mean, however, that places and place names are relative or imagined. Places and their names retain residues of meaning that flow from one generation to another, even from one epoch to the next.

Consider the geographical term "Syria". Like a mythical hero, it undergoes a series of incarnations, disappearing only to come back to life unexpectedly. In a new guise, "Syria" is shaped by historical characters who conjure it up and it is buffeted by circumstances even its conjurers cannot control. Greek writers first used the term "Syria" in the seventh century BCE to describe what is known today as geographical Syria, a region that stretches north to south from the foothills of the Taurus Mountains in Anatolia to the Sinai Peninsula and the edges of the Arabian Desert, and west to east from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River.[1] Around the time of the historian Herodotus (fifth century BCE), Greeks began to use "Syria" for geographical Syria and "Assyria" for Upper Mesopotamia even though the people of those lands used both terms interchangeably at least through the early Christian era.[2] After the Greeks, the Romans were the first to use "Syria" to name an administrative province. The term made its way into the geographical lexicon of the Eastern Roman Empire, the Christian Byzantine Empire. "Syria" was still in use during the first century of Arab Muslim rule though, ghostlike, it was about to disappear from the region itself for the better part of a millennium and a half. Syria as a place (if not the term) remained to play a role in Islamic history, this time under the name "al-Sham" until the eleventh century CE. For most of the middle period (950-1500)

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1 Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, "The Name of Syria in Ancient and Modern Usage," *Al-Qantara: Revista de Estudios Arabes* 15, no. 2 (1994): 285-296.

2 Richard Frye, "Assyria and Syria: Synonyms," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 51, no. 4 (Oct. 1992): 281-285. For more on the ancient origins of "Syria" and "Assyria" see Robert Rollinger, "The Terms "Assyria" and "Syria" Again," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 65, no. 4 (October 2006): 283-287.

of decentralization in the Muslim world, it then came under the name "Bilad al-Sham" (country of al-Sham) and was more often than not divided or attached to neighboring regions and subject to the whims of competing potentates. In the wake of the Crusades, a succession of Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman rulers fostered its status as an Islamic holy land.

In a curious reversal, less than three hundred years after Ottoman Sultan Suleiman I rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, Egyptian occupiers of the region welcomed American missionaries who revived the use of the term "Syria". By the mid-nineteenth century, these efforts were bearing fruit among the local population.  In 1859, Khalil al-Khuri published *Kharabat al-Suriya* (Ruins of Syria), the first Arabic-language book with Syria in its title. The next year Butrus al-Bustani launched a newspaper, *Nafir al-Suriya* (Syria's trumpet), an early sign that there would be more to "Syria" than just a new word for an old land.  Ottoman reformers did their part to usher in adoption of this new-old name for the land when, in 1876, a constitution led to the creation of new and larger administrative units including the Province of Syria.

After a little over a hundred years since its first reappearance, and after an absence of the better part of a millennium and a half, a state bearing the name "Syria" was created following the demise of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. In 1919, the General Syrian Congress, including representatives from Palestine and Lebanon, made their case for a united Greater Syria in a last-ditch effort to head off French colonial rule. However, by the 1930s, Syrian nationalists resigned themselves to arguing for a Syrian republic shorn of many of its historic parts. Under the rule of the Arab nationalist Ba'th Party, Syrian particularism was further enshrined even as, officially, Syria was one *qaṭr*, or province, among others within the larger Arab nation. Since shortly after the outbreak of civil war in Syria of 2011, Islamist organizations—most notably the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS)—reclaimed the Islamicate term for the region.

ISIS's al-Sham is in some ways akin to that of ancient Greece (and of the radical secularist Syrian Social Nationalist Party established in 1932) as it envisions unity between Syria and Iraq. On the other hand, its Islamist strain draws on medieval Muslim usage. Similar juxtapositions of continuity and disjuncture hold for other regions covered by this collection—al-Andalus, the Maghrib, and Kurdistan—not to mention a host of other lands of the Islamicate world and well beyond. The varied and shifting designations and meanings of these regions is likewise reflected in a host of scholarly traditions and disciplines employed to make sense of them. This collection of essays on attachment to specific lands in the pre-modern Islamicate world thus engages a spectrum of debates within Islamic Studies and within broader theoretical

and comparative circles of inquiry. These include writing on territory and national belonging, the symbolic and cultural dimensions of "spaces" as "places", mutability and persistence in consciousness of place and attachment, and the implications of historical continuities in land-based senses of belonging for understanding modern national identities.

Historians with a modernist bias argue that the territorial dimensions of national identity—like other aspects of the nation state—were determined by the economic, technological, and ideological innovations of modernity. The nation state, the dominant form of political organization in the modern era, required the means to exert complete ideological and coercive power over the territory it laid claim to. It developed an arsenal of tools like uniform educational and linguistic institutions, standardized bureaucracies, and new technologies of communication as well as an army of functionaries including teachers, civil servants, and soldiers to ensure that the political and national unit became one. In essence, the state created the nation.[3] Historians who highlight manufactured nature of this process emphasize the invented, imagined, and artificial nature of the creation of national identities in modern times.[4] The main critics of modernism in nationalism studies are the so-called perennialists who put a premium on the symbolic and cultural aspects of national identity, particularly as they relate to ethnicity. From this point of view, pre-modern—even ancient—traditions are important and integral to the formation of modern national identities. Ethnic identities, for one, have deep social roots that may lie dormant or less salient in some periods than in others; they are, consequently, perennial. To dismiss pre-modern loyalties and belongings is to misunderstand the power and persistence of cultural bonds and why some groups and not others develop nationhood or national identities that are more robust than others.[5] To highlight the persistence of ethnic attachments to particular regions today, one scholar proposes the use of the term "homeland" over "territory" as it highlights the deep-seated emotional bonds between certain regions and certain people.[6] Many of the conflicts of late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the argument goes, derive from the fact that the earth's surface is divided into some three thousand homelands over which the

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3    Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalisms* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993).
4    Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1993); Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1994).
5    Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).
6    Walker Connor, "Homelands in a World of States" in Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson, eds. *Understanding Nationalism* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2001), 53-73.

political borders of less than two hundred nation states have been superimposed.[7] Increased interest in the cultural and symbolic pull of territory as homeland has led to some overlap between functionalist and materialist orientations within modernist schools of thought and the cultural, symbolic, and pre-modern orientations of the perennialist approach.[8]

Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet's *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946* is a formidable example of how important understanding the real, even material, importance of pre-modern sensibilities is to understanding the creation of modern Middle Eastern and predominantly Muslim states.[9] Kashani-Sabet does not deny that myths and "frontier fictions" were part of the creation of the modern Iranian nation state. But the process of creating an Iranian national identity was made possible by the very real and material aspects of land and geography. Iran as "Iranshahr" or "Iranzamin" existed in the minds of many of its people long before the modern era and even before the arrival of Islam. It corresponds to the dominions of the pre-Islamic Sasanian Empire (224-651 CE) and, today, to modern Iran. Much of this territory had been lost to Russia, the Ottomans, and rival neighboring states while royal sovereignty over key trading entrepots was ceded to British and Dutch merchants during the waning years of Safavid rule (1501-1722). Beginning with the Qajars (1795-1925) in the 1850s and ending with Reza Shah Pahlavi a hundred years later, the ideas and the tools (primarily those associated with geography) and the personnel (mostly military) were trained and deployed to create a new-old Iranian nation.[10] Reza Shah's efforts to "Persianize" Iran failed but they served to intensify

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7    Connor, "Homelands," 56.

8    Jan Penrose, "Nations, States, and Homelands: Territory and Territoriality in Nationalist Thought," *Nations and Nationalisms* 8, no. 3 (2002): 277-297.

9    Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

10   In *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2016), Reza Zia-Ebrahami adds to this debate the element of race, specifically the European idea of "Aryanness" as adopted by nineteenth-century Iranian nationalists. The concoction of a new understanding of Iranian identity is nevertheless grounded in a celebration of pre-Islamic Persian traditions as well as the fact that, beginning in the sixteenth century, the Safavids had re-established a distinctly Iranian state for the first time since the defeat of the Sasanian Empire by Muslim Arabs in the mid-seventh century. In *The New Muslims of Post- Conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Sarah Bowen Savant reaches back to the ninth through eleventh centuries to demonstrate how Iranian Muslim historians, notably Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923), carefully integrated Persians and elements from pre-Islamic Persian history to sculpt a distinctly Persian Muslim identity. But there were boundaries to how inventive they could be. "The past does not exist on its own terms but rather must be assembled, this occurring as an act of representation.

allegiance to the Iranian homeland. "Land based conceptions of countries such as Iran existed before the advent of modernity, and nation-states, including Iran, were not only linked to their historical definitions but took shape through cultural reinterpretations of the land resulting from political conflicts and frontier fluctuations."[11] In sum, the territorial boundaries that define a nation state like Iran are not invented, imagined, or created artificially but are based on precedents that reach deep into history.

As scholars of modern national identity have been drawn to its pre-modern antecedents, students of Islamicate societies are exploring, as it were, new ground with research projects that revolve around land and identity from a pre-modern Muslim vantage point. Traditionally, historians of the pre-modern Islamic world emphasize broad religious and institutional affiliations such as to the international community of Muslims, *al-umma*; to the major legal schools of thought, *madhāhib*; to Sufi confraternities, *ṭuruq*; or to the state, *al-dawla*, on the one hand, and to local primordial attachments to neighborhood, town, village, tribe or lineage, on the other. The contributors to this collection focus on lands, such as Bilad al-Akrad (Kurdistan), al-Andalus (Islamic Spain), the Maghrib (North Africa), and Bilad al-Sham (geographical Syria). These territories occupy an intermediate position between the pan-Muslim, on the one hand, and the parochial, on the other, and have recently been the focus of new kinds of research. For our purposes, land and, relatedly, territory or region denote discrete and identifiable areas often—but not always—bounded by natural features that incorporate political, social, and/or cultural significance for their inhabitants and those who write about them.

The study of medieval Egypt, particularly in the West, is a telling example of how a pre-occupation with religion, Islam in particular, prevented modern scholars from taking seriously the non-Muslim and pre-Islamic heritage of the country as a component of the medieval Muslim Egyptian sense of identity. It was almost an article of faith that there could be no sense of continuity between Islamic Egypt and its ancient past given the totalizing influence Western scholars attributed to the religion.[12] Okasha El-Daly's *Egyptology: The Missing Millennium: Ancient Egypt in Medieval Arabic Writings* presents a catalog of ref-

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Representation takes place within a social framework encompassing agents and their audiences, and is made to an audience on behalf of a social entity, its most blatant forms appearing as propaganda. However, Muslims could not write history however they pleased. The past was not infinitely flexible, but it could be reworked within certain boundaries." Savant, *The New Muslims*, 168.

11    Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*, 10.

12    Okasha El-Daly, *Egyptology: The Missing Millennium: Ancient Egypt in Medieval Arabic Writings* (London: University College London, 2005), 1-3.

erences from medieval Arabic sources to refute this presumption. These texts demonstrate a keen interest on the part of medieval Muslim scholars from Egypt and beyond in preserving, deciphering, and analyzing monuments, artifacts, and texts from Egypt of the pyramids, the pharaohs, and hieroglyphs. For medieval Egyptian scholars, such as ʿUmar b. Muhammad al-Kindi (fl. tenth century), author of *Fadaʾil Misr* (Virtues of Egypt) and Ahmad b. ʿAli al-Qalqashandi (d. 1418), author of *Kitab Subh al-Aʿsha fi Sinaʿat al-Insha'* (Dawn for the night blind), studying the land's ancient heritage was grounded in pride and love for the country and its antiquities. Medieval Arab and Egyptian geographers used the term "Misr" and agreed on its boundaries as extending from the Mediterranean following the Nile south past Aswan to the edge of Nubia (Sudan) and then east to the Red Sea and north to the Sinai Peninsula through Gaza back to the Mediterranean.

Boundaries are, of course, only one dimension of what makes a space a place, a territory a country, and a region a homeland. Until the rise of humanistic geography in the 1970s, geographers concentrated on the physical dimensions of regions and described and explained differences between parts of the Earth's surface in terms of the natural environment.[13] For humanistic geographers, the key word was "place" (as opposed to "space" or "area") as it is imbued with a degree of subjectivity and allows for the flexibility and mutability of human perception and personal experience as in "a sense of place". In this vein, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan coined the term "topophilia" for the "affective bond between people and place."[14]

Discussion of the affective and symbolic attributes of places as well as the degree to which these aspects are human constructions is now central to the scholarly treatment of lands in pre-modern times. In *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World,* Zayde Antrim—a contributor to this collection—uses the concept of "discourse of place" to explore representations of territory in Arabic texts dating from the ninth through the eleventh centuries and covering most of the Islamicate world. Discourse of place puts a premium on the ways in which places inspired the human proclivities to legitimate authority, to share experiences, and to express the desire to belong. Antrim's approach crosses the traditional distinctions of genre because, for one, land-based categories of belonging can be found in a multitude of different kinds of writing. These include world geographies like ʿUbaydallah b. ʿAbdallah Ibn Khurradadhbih's (d. 912) *Kitab al-Masalik wa-l-Mamalik* (Book of routes and realms); regional geographies like al-Hasan b. Ahmad al-Hamdani's

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13      Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 16-18.
14      Cresswell, *Place*, 20.

(d. 945) *Sifat Jazirat al-ʿArab* (Attributes of the Arabian Peninsula); city histories such as Ahmad b. ʿAli al-Khatib al-Baghdadi's (d. 1071) *Taʾrikh Baghdad* (History of Baghdad); religious texts as in the *qisas al-anbiyāʾ* (stories of the prophets) which were used by Muhammad b. ʿAbdallah al-Azraqi (d. 864) in his foundational narrative for Mecca in *Akhbar Makka* (History of Mecca); travelogues like Nasir-i Khusraw's (d. 1088) *Safarnama* (Book of travels); and literary anthologies such as ʿAmr b. Bahr al-Jahiz's (d. 868) *Hanin ila l-Awtan* (Longing for the homeland). These and other texts reveal shared vocabularies and connections between authors and their audiences and between authors, readers, and lands. In sum, "In the early Islamic world, from the Iberian Peninsula to the river valleys of the Indus and Oxus, land was an object of desire and a category of belonging."[15] A scattering of studies have pursued these themes over the last two decades if in a less systematic and comprehensive way.

Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila examines the case of two tenth-century Iraqi scholars who articulated a brand of indigenous Iraqi proto-nationalism in the face of Arab political and cultural domination.[16] In the wake of the Abbasid Revolution in which Arabs lost their political monopoly over Islam and, perhaps, in concert with the concurrent anti-Arab Persian ethnocentrism of the *shuʿūbiyya* movement, non-Arab converts felt more comfortable in exploring and celebrating their pre-Islamic roots. ʿAli b. al-Husayn al-Masʿudi (d. 956), author of the geographical text *Muruj al-Dhahab wa-Maʿadin al-Jawhar* (Meadows of gold and mines of jewels) and Ahmad b. ʿAli Ibn Wahshiyya (fl. 956), author of the agricultural manual *al-Filaha al-Nabatiyya* (Nabataean agriculture), articulated the bonds of the indigenous people of Mesopotamia to their land. Both identified the indigenous people of this land as "Nabataean", a usage not to be confused with the Nabataean civilization associated with Petra in modern-day Jordan but applied more generally to Aramaic speakers of the Middle East region as a whole. Ibn Wahshiyya explicitly identified himself as a Nabataean and the fact that he is best remembered for his book on indigenous agriculture accentuates his attachment to the land and its ancient traditions. Hämeen-Anttila characterizes Ibn Wahshiyya's work in particular as emblematic of an outburst of "national spirit" around the beginning of the tenth century and argues that it demonstrates that elements of ancient Mesopotamian culture

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15    Zayde Antrim, *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 8.

16    Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, "Mesopotamian National Identity in Early Arabic Sources," *Wiener Zeitschrift Für Die Kunde Des Morgenlandes* 92 (2002): 53-79. For a related argument based on sources from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Syria, see Steve Tamari, "Arab National Consciousness in Early Modern Syria" in *Syria and* Bilad al-Sham *under Ottoman Rule: Essays in Honor of Abdul-Karim Rafeq*, Peter Sluglett, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 309-321.

survived for more than a thousand years after the demise of the ancient empires.[17]

Most medievalists shy away from characterizing pre-modern ethnic solidarities and expressions of regionalism as nationalist. In a micro-study of an Iraqi family of the tenth century, for example, Julia Bray uses family histories to trace how the Buhlulids of Baghdad preserved a foundation myth linked to the region of al-Anbar that stamped the identity of the family for generations thus making the case for the importance of place to self-conception.[18] Other scholars are not so reserved but approach the connections between the territorial dimensions of pre-modern national consciousness and modern nationalist identities, if with more trepidation than Hämeen-Anttila. Antrim points to the use by twelfth- and thirteenth-century Syrian scholars of the term *waṭan*, which she translates as "homeland" rather than "nation". She argues that *waṭan* denotes emotional attachment in addition to the political and religious aspects of these writers' sense of belonging to Bilad al-Sham.[19] She proposes that scholars explore the role played by territory in delineating allegiances in the pre-modern world and, by extension, the relationship between the pre-modern understanding of *waṭan*, on the one hand, and the modern use of the concept of *waṭaniyya* (nationalism)*,* on the other. Alexander Elinson, another contributor to this volume, offers an analysis of Andalusian Arabic poetry of the period of the Reconquista (1085-1492) which bridges the literary traditions of pre-Islamic Arabia and medieval Muslim Spain with implications for modern Muslim nostalgia for Andalusia. In *Looking Back at al-Andalus: The Poetics of Loss and Nostalgia in Medieval Arabic and Hebrew Literature,* Elinson argues that the lamentation poetry for the loss of al-Andalus, *rithāʾ al-mudun* (city elegies), derives from the poetic theme of pre-Islamic Arabia known as *al-bukāʾ ʿala l-aṭlāl* (weeping over deserted encampments) in which the poet grieves over abandoning the campsite and its association with lost love.[20] Elinson notes that there are parallels between medieval Arab nostalgia for Andalusia and that of modern Arab and Muslim writers and artists who see it as a lost "paradise of cultural splendor, a symbol of displacement and exile, a site of religious tolerance, or a past to be embraced and learned from."[21] Though there

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17    Hämeen-Anttila, "Mesopotamian National Identity," 68.
18    Julia Bray, "Place and Self-Image: the Buhlulids and Tanukhids and Their Family Traditions," *Quarderni di Studi Arabi,* 3 (2008): 39-66.
19    Zayde Antrim, "*Watan* before *Wataniyya*: Loyalty to Land in Ayyubid and Mamluk Syria," *Al-Masaq* 22, no. 2 (2010), 173-190.
20    Alexander Elinson, *Looking Back at al-Andalus: The Poetics of Loss and Nostalgia in Medieval Arabic and Hebrew Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).
21    Elinson, *Looking Back*, 2.

are doubtless connections to draw between the character of attachment to lands in different epochs, there is no doubt that the nature of such attachments is shaped by particular historical circumstances. Collective identities are always subject to the mutability wrought by the slings and arrows of changing political, economic, and social transformations. With regard to geographical Syria, there is a body of scholarship on the process whereby the country was consciously and deliberately sacralized during the Crusades (1096-1291) and then under Mamluk rule (1260-1517). The shrewd use of propaganda, including monuments and shrines, shaped the religious landscape of al-Sham. New structures and refurbished tombs, in turn, produced new kinds of writing such as the *faḍāʾil* al-Sham literature which praised the virtues of this land as an abode of prophets and saints and then *kutub ziyāra,* pilgrimage guides, to meet the growing desire to visit the region.[22] This process had a particular impact on consciousness of Palestine as a distinct part of geographical Syria among its own inhabitants.[23] Taking a cue from their medieval predecessors, nineteenth-century Ottoman officials and Palestinian notables, members of the Jerusalemite Husayni family in particular, revived the practice of annual pilgrimages to the shrine of Nabi Musa (the prophet Moses) to register discomfort with the increasing weight of foreign interests in the country.[24]

Scholarly texts and the actions of political elites cannot fully explain how the sacredness of a landscape acquires resonance among masses of devotees. In *The Shrines of the ʿAlids in Medieval Syria: Sunnis, Shiʿis and the Architecture of Coexistence,* Stephennie Mulder employs the tools of archeology and architecture to uncover and explain the curious fact that between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries forty shrines devoted to ʿAli and his family were built in Bilad al-Sham. Sunni patrons built most of them and all were frequented by both Shiʿi and Sunni pilgrims.[25] The most important insight of this work for our purposes is Mulder's conclusion that the land itself mediated the ways in

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22    Paul Cobb, "Virtual Sacrality: Making Muslim Syria Sacred before the Crusades," *Medieval Encounters* 8, no. 1 (2001): 35-55; Y. Frenkel, "Baybars and the Sacred Geography of Bilad al-Sham: A Chapter in the Islamization of Syria's Landscape," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2002): 153-170; Josef W. Meri, "A Late Medieval Syrian Pilgrimage Guide: Ibn al-Awrani's *al-Isharat ila Amakin al-Ziyarat,*" *Medieval Encounters* 7, no. 1 (2001): 3-18; Josef W. Meri, "Ziyara" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed. P. Bearman, T. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), XI: 524-529.

23    Haim Gerber, *Remembering and Imagining Palestine: Identity and Nationalism from the Crusades to the Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan, 2008), 42-79.

24    Ilan Pappe, "The Rise and Fall of the Husaynis, 1840-1922 (Part 1)," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 10 (2000), 36.

25    Stephennie Mulder, *The Shrines of the ʿAlids in Medieval Syria: Sunnis, Shiʿis and the Architecture of Coexistence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2014).

which pious Muslims—Sunni and Shiʻi—experienced sacred history. "Medieval Muslims experienced sacred history through the land... for the majority of ordinary Muslims, the crucial point of interaction with Islamic history was not literary, but physical through contact with holy places, by means of *ziyāra* ... Medieval Muslims perceived the land of Syria as sacred, and [they] viewed Greater Syria as a concentrated nexus of holy sites that created a localized landscape of sacrality."[26]

As scholars have turned from the positivist pursuit of mining medieval texts for data (and criticizing them for their lacunae and inconsistencies), the priorities and proclivities of medieval historians themselves and their milieus are receiving more attention. In *Authority and Identity in Medieval Islamic Historiography: Persian Histories from the Peripheries*, Mimi Hanaoka uncovers the ways in which medieval Persian historians found legitimacy as non-Arab Muslims by weaving Arab genealogies and biographical information into their cities and regions.[27] Descendants and companions of the Prophet Muhammad appear in these peripheral regions of the *umma* through dreams, myths, and invented family trees which are nonetheless foundational to the development of Perso-Muslim identity. In the process, a historian like Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Isfandiyar (d. 1217), author of *Tarikh-i Tabaristan* (History of Tabaristan)*,* acknowledged the magnanimity of Tabaristan's pre-Islamic dynastic rulers and the piety of the region's *sāda* (descendants of the Prophet) and thus embedded his region "into the arc of Islamic history while maintaining the region's local identity."[28]

Not only can a country's character evolve, but the same landscape can project completely different impressions and meanings on observers of similar religious, ethnic, and social standings, and separated by mere decades. In the case of tenth-century Muslim Spain these happened to be momentous decades. Janina Safran's comparison of the Spanish landscape as described by two Andalusian historians of the Muslim conquests illustrates how this can happen. ʻAbd al-Malik Ibn Habib's (d. 853) depiction of the military campaigns of Musa Ibn Nusayr (d. 716) evokes a territory charged with fear and foreboding, even an anticipation of the Apocalypse. "The representation of the land as strange and forbidding suggests a primeval state before the transformation of Islam, and also underscores the peninsula's distance and isolation from the

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26    Mulder, *Shrines of the ʻAlids*, 247.

27    Mimi Hanaoka, *Authority and Identity in Medieval Islamic Historiography: Persian Histories from the Peripheries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

28    Hanaoka, *Authority and Identity*, 253.

heartlands of Islamic civilization."[29] Writing later but during the same century, the anonymous writer of *Akhbar Majmuʻa* (Collected histories) expresses complete confidence in Umayyad rule as the book tallies one military victory after another and the author enumerates the integration of towns captured and absorbed into the whole under the safety and security of a Muslim regime. If we add to these depictions of Andalusia those of the waves of defeat and exile that began in the late eleventh century—the subject of Elinson's and Mary Halavais' contributions to this volume—the territory acquires, yet again, new meaning and significance.

Mutability of place and a place name in the case of Rum has a history as old and twisting as that of Syria. The land of Rum, which derives from "Rome" as in the Eastern or Byzantine Roman Empire, played a central role in Turkish history from the time of the Seljuqs through the more than 600 years of Ottoman history. Historically, it referred to the geographical region also known as "Anadolu" (Anatolia) but it carried potent cultural significance as well. The word Rum or *diyar-i Rum* (lands of Rum) goes back to pre-Seljuq Arabo-Persian usage. It then became attached to Muslims of Anatolia as in the writings of the famous poet and mystic Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (d. 1272) and a host of other medieval literary figures, scholars, and Sufis. It was also used to describe a collectivity of educated Turkish-speaking urbanites with social standing in contrast to "Turk" which was applied to rural and tribal folk. According to Cemal Kafardar, the heyday of "Rumi" as a socially and culturally meaningful category stretches from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries.[30] The fortunes of Rum as a geographical designation also waxed and waned. It was used to designate Anatolia beginning in the late medieval period but in the late eighteenth century was replaced by Anadolu which, however, did not have a deep "cultural resonance" until the Balkan Wars in 1913 when the Ottoman Empire lost almost all of its remaining European territories. In contrast to what happened in the West, the Turkish Muslim appropriation of Roman-ness was not the image of Rome but the "soil that the Rumis inhabited and some of the continuous cultural and dispositions."[31] In a phrase that echoes the goals of this collection as a whole, Kafardar writes, "In our rethinking of history writing through essentialized national, religious, and state-based categories, however, we can benefit from deeper excavation of premodern conceptualizations of identity

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29 Janina Safran, "From Alien Terrain to the Abode of Islam: Landscapes in the Conquest of al-Andalus," in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Sense of Place in Western Europe*, eds. John Howe and Michael Wolfe (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002), 136-149.

30 Cemal Kafardar, "A Rome of One's Own: Reflections on Cultural Geography and Identity in the Lands of Rum," *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 7-25.

31 Kafardar, "Rome of One's Own," 20.

as embodied in the notion of Rumi-ness, among others, and better understand the vicissitudes of selfhood in the plural environments we study."[32]

This collection of essays adds five chapters covering new eras and new regions to the existing scholarship on lands and belonging in the pre-modern Islamicate world. Together they put a premium on the affective and cultural dimensions of attachment to lands in the pre-modern Islamic world, fluctuations in the meaning and significance of lands in the face of historical transformations and, at the same time, the real and persistent qualities of lands and human attachments to them over long periods of time. Such elements of continuity, in turn, challenge scholars to examine more closely than has been the case, the relationship between pre-modern and modern aspects of land-based identities. Given the reality that identities were "grounded" in lands, this collection adds historiographical nuance and new cases studies to further the lines of research outlined above. These essays demonstrate that grounded identities are persistent and never static.

In "Constructing the Realm of the Kurds (al-Mamlaka al-Akradiyya): Kurdish In-betweenness and Mamluk Ethnic Engineering (1130-1340 CE)," Boris James anchors his discussion of the emergence of a region identified as Kurdish within a distinct political economy that began to take shape as early as the twelfth century. In contrast to modern ethno-nationalist assumptions, James argues that imperial outsiders—primarily Mongols and Turks—and Arab historians, geographers, and administrators were primarily responsible for devising the terms and the external conditions that gave this space in Upper Mesopotamia its—albeit fluid—borders. The primary objectives of Turkish emirs, Ilkanid rulers, and Ayyubid and Mamluk writers were, on the one hand, to create a buffer zone between one another and, on the other, to employ the Kurds of Bilad al-Akrad as a Muslim vanguard against Byzantine, Crusader and other Christian forces in these borderlands. Simultaneously, Kurds of the region, who didn't always constitute a demographic majority, created the internal conditions through a variety of economic activities (not limited to the nomadic pastoralism and banditry that they are usually identified with) that kept outsiders at bay. In time, regional powers made accommodations that allowed for the incorporation of Kurdish elements within larger imperial structures while allowing them a high degree of autonomy. Long before the Ottoman period and certainly centuries before the rise of Kurdish nationalism, argues James, a Kurdish "territoriality"—if not a Kurdish national homeland—had become a political and economic reality.

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32      Kafadar, "Rome of One's Own," 21.

In "Becoming Syrian: Aleppo in Ibn al-'Adim's Thirteenth-Century *Bughyat al-Talab fi Ta'rikh Halab,*" Zayde Antrim traces the evolution of a "discourse of place" whereby the Aleppan hadith scholar Ibn al-'Adim systematically inserted Aleppo into a conception of Bilad al-Sham which had already been formulated by his Damascene predecessors. Antrim argues that Ibn al-'Adim's ability to insinuate Aleppo and northern Syria into a discourse of Bilad al-Sham that had previously revolved around Damascus had to do with a specific political constellation. At the turn of the thirteenth century, Ayyubid Aleppo witnessed a degree of stability and prosperity while Cairo and Damascus were engulfed by political conflict. The result was the growth of pride in place among northern Syrians. In the case of Ibn al-'Adim's version of Syria, Antrim also makes the case for fluidity in conceptions of a land. Antrim's close reading of the specific areas that concern Ibn al-'Adim in and around Aleppo reveals both the integration of Aleppo within the broader context of geographical Syria if with a distinctly northern twist. Aleppo, as conceived by Ibn al-'Adim, is also the heart of a sub-region that extends well beyond its immediate hinterland and even beyond the territory of the Ayyubid rulers of his time. In Antrim's telling, Ibn al-'Adim draws upon a host of traditions and sources—historical and Qur'anic and otherwise prophetic—to make the case for Aleppan exceptionalism. Antrim concludes that the geographical and historical work of 'Izz al-Din Ibn Shaddad (d. 1285), writing a generation after Ibn al-'Adim, sealed the process of fully integrating Aleppo into Bilad al-Sham as a whole.

As much as the meanings of these lands are historically contingent, they are also never static in terms in terms of their boundaries and physical dimensions. In "Lisan al-Din ibn al-Khatib and the Definition of the Fourteenth-Century Muslim West," Alexander Elinson focuses on the literary and travel works of the Andalusian scholar and diplomat Ibn al-Khatib (d. 1374). Ibn al-Khatib's descriptions of place and of shifting definitions of Andalusia and the Maghrib problematize the separation between the two at a time when Andalusia, which was once at the center of the Muslim West, was increasingly relegated to the periphery. During Ibn al-Khatib's lifetime, Andalusia was receding into the status of a periphery with the advance of Christian Spanish forces, which would defeat the last Muslim state in Granada, less than two decades after his death. An extended exile in Fez provided Ibn al-Khatib with the time to explore and experience what was different and what was familiar about this neighboring Muslim territory. Elinson dubs Ibn al-Khatib as a man *dhū al-'udwatayn* (of two shores) and thus adds complexity where modernist or nationalist perspectives might miss the nuances of shifting and ambiguous attachments to lands.

In "Going Home: al-Andalus and Exile in the Seventeenth Century," Mary Hoyt Halavais uses Spanish court records to uncover the powerful pull of

"home" as homeland in her study of the efforts made by Moriscos—Spaniards of Muslim origin—to return to Spain after a 1609 royal decree of expulsion. Within the context of a legacy of autonomy for towns and deeply held notions of home as a specific place rather than a system of laws, Hoyt Halavais studies court records that reveal, on the one hand, non-Morisco Spaniards acting as neighbors and defending the claims of their Morisco peers to escape expulsion or to return home to Spain. Correspondingly, she points to cases of Moriscos braving severe punishment—up to, and including, execution— to demonstrate the "pull" of attachment to place. The curious case of the pirates of the exclusively Morisco Republic of Bou Regreg (1609-1668) exemplifies the commitment on the part of thousands of exiled Moriscos to remain apart from native Moroccans and to insist on their Spanish identity.

In "The Land of Syria in the late Seventeenth Century: 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi and Linking City and Countryside through Study, Travel, and Worship," Steve Tamari places the travelogues of Shaykh al-Nabulusi (d. 1731) within the long trajectory of recognition of geographical Syria as a discrete land. Al-Nabulusi's travels back and forth between the cities and towns of geographical Syria from 1689 to 1700 traced the contours of this territory and accentuated the connections that tied countryside to city and one rural area to another. Tamari highlights the role of an individual in evoking patterns that weave a far-flung land together as one. Al-Nabulusi's traveling and writing both accentuated the special status of Syria and tied its constituent sub-regions together. Thus, Bilad al-Sham became the counterpart of the Hijaz, Jerusalem Syria's Mecca, and Mt. Lebanon to the Beqaa what Mt. Qasyun is to Damascus. The degree to which al-Nabulusi relied on—and even embraced—the citizens of small towns and villages and peasants as informants defy the stereotype of the cloistered, urban scholarly elite and reveal an even more tangible attachment to the land *and* its people. He celebrated its natural beauty and its bounty with poetry that expressed delight in this-worldly, even sensual, pleasures. His curiosity about the plants and soils of the region inspired him to enter into the ancient school of Syrian agronomy with a book of his own on the topic. Al-Nabulusi's late seventeenth-century travels reveal an attachment to a land that is at once inspired by its spiritual status and grounded by exchanges with its people and experiences within its natural and built environment.

Collectively, these essays make the case for attachment to specific lands as part and parcel of pre-modern Muslim sensibilities; that such attachments develop within specific historical conditions and contexts; and that lands themselves are subject to reorientations that might bridge territories that otherwise seem separate. That said, the importance of historical contingency does not translate into contemporary irrelevance. Hoyt Halavais notes that the right to

return to one's home was enshrined in the United Nations "Universal Declaration of Rights of Man" (1948) and, though it was ultimately defeated, a 2006 proposal by Andalusia's provincial government aimed to allow descendants of Spain's exiled Moriscos to return. As news today is filled with the tragedy of boat people struggling to cross the political, cultural, and economic divide that is today's Mediterranean Sea separating Europe from Africa and the Middle East, a study like Elinson's reminds us that even such seemingly permanent divides as these are historically contingent and susceptible to construction and deconstruction. He notes that not long ago Ibn al-Khatib's tomb in Fez was renovated as a joint project of the municipalities of Fez, where he died, and his birthplace in the Spanish city of Loja, and points out how these two cultural locales came to be essential in the definition of Spain and Morocco respectively.

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# Constructing the Realm of the Kurds (*al-Mamlaka al-Akradiyya*): Kurdish In-betweenness and Mamluk Ethnic Engineering (1130-1340 CE)

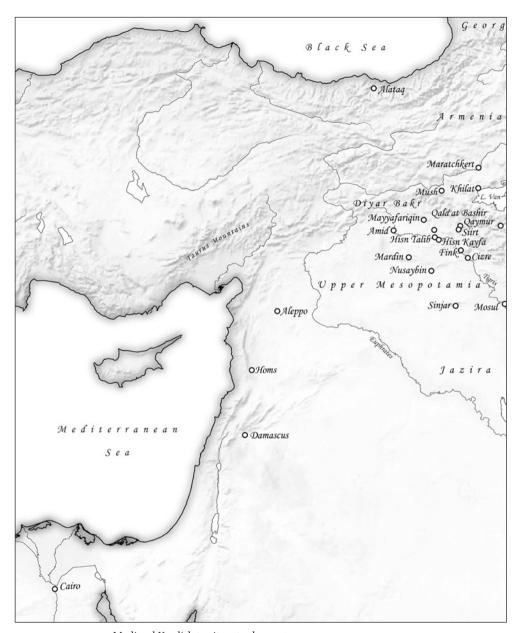*Boris James*

## 1       Introduction

In the conception of space that Arabic-writing geographers and chroniclers had of the medieval East, some designations referred clearly to a Kurdish presence (Bilad al-Akrad, Jibal al-Akrad, Zuzan al-Akrad, and Kurdistan) in Upper Mesopotamia, even if such a presence does not necessarily mean that Kurds constituted a majority in those regions. The emergence and the establishment of such designations constitute one of the aspects which needs to be studied in order to situate the birth of a Kurdish territorial space from the Middle Ages onwards.

Since the main link we have with the societies of the Middle Ages exist in the form of texts that have been bequeathed to us as manuscripts, we are condemned to obsessively consider particular phrases, often with only a limited understanding of the context in which they were written, in order to address the problems posed by territorial and ethnic categories. The process of categorisation is multiform, originating from several sources and resulting in the creation of categories with multiple meanings. More specifically, the process of categorisation is informed by social, political and intellectual environments which, in turn, results in a multitude of constructions. As Catherine Quiminal notes: "While categorising one does not only arrange objects in pre-given classes of belonging, one selects a principle of classification which defines the situation."[1] Thus, I will insist on contextualising meaning and propose several readings through which one can understand the use of a term such as "Kurdistan" in the Middle Ages.[2]

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[1]   Catherine Quiminal, "Nouvelles mobilités et anciennes catégories," *Ville-école-intégration* 131 (Dec. 2002) : 3.

[2]   Of course, today "Kurdistan" has an overtly political meaning. In the age of nationalism Kurdistan has come to imply the territory (or at least the aspiration for a territory) of a poten-

MAP 3        Medieval Kurdish territory to the west

MAP 4      Medieval Kurdish territory to the east

The contention of this chapter is not to address the issue of the reproduction during this period of the ethnic category "Kurd" which has been dealt with in other works.[3] I will avoid getting into the details of cultural elements of distinctiveness such as Kurdish linguistic differences. Since the time of al-Mas'udi's (d. 956) geographical works and throughout the medieval period, Arabic-writing authors have perceived Kurds as a distinct linguistic group.[4] However, I take the stance of Fredrik Barth in considering that cultural elements do not lie at the core of ethnic differentiation but articulate themselves within a social, economic and political context.[5] Although such symbolic elements could well be involved in the process of shaping territorial frontiers, I will prioritize specific political and social conditions that led to the construction of Kurdish ethno-geographic categories.

Although my argument focuses on the building of a Kurdish space during the Mamluk period (1250-1340), I situate this in the context of earlier notions relating to a Kurdish territory. First, I provide an overall picture of the Middle Ages and describe the way this conception developed over time. I highlight the factors, specifically the Turkmen invasions and the Zengid counter-Crusade (c. 1130) that led to both the reduction in size and the westward drift of the Kurdish territory. Second, I focus on the "in between geography" of this area meaning the presence of the Kurds in a specific territory as well as the practice of pastoralism that put them in an intermediate position between both worlds of great nomadic groups (Arabs and Turks) and two macro-regions (the Iranian Plateau and Mesopotamia, each of which is defined by geological and ecological as well as socio-political coherence). My approach emphasizes the link between banditry and the collection of the *khafāra* (protection tax). On the one hand, this reveals the diffusion of military practices among the Kurds and, on the other, a social and political order in which imperial powers (Mamluks and Mongols) were often irrelevant. Thus, geographic and economic in-betweenness go hand-in-hand with a political in-betweenness which contributed to the autonomy of Kurdish tribes from the Mamluk period onward. Third, I trace territorial designations such as Zuzan al-Akrad and Bilad al-Akrad.

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tial Kurdish nation state. Kurdistan is also used in modern times for specific administrative divisions in modern nation states. Examples are the Iranian province of Kurdistan and the Kurdish autonomous region of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government.

3    Boris James, "Arab Ethnonyms (Ajam, Arab, Badu and Turk): The Kurdish Case as a Paradigm for Thinking about Differences in the Middle Ages," *Iranian Studies* 47, no. 5 (2014): 683-713.

4    'Ali b. al-Husayn al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-Dhahab wa-Ma'adin al-Jawhar*. Edited by Ch. Pellat. Beirut: al-Jami'a al-Lubnaniyya, 1966.

5    Fredrik Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Frederik Barth (Oslo: Universitets Forlaget, 1969), 9-37.

I emphasise the fact that these appellations depend on a political situation that promoted the role of the Kurds as an Islamic vanguard fighting against unbelievers (Armenians, Georgians and Mongols). Finally, I stress the particular role of the Mamluk realm in efforts at Kurdish ethnic engineering which were undertaken in order to create a buffer zone directed at both undermining the Mongols and extending Mamluk influence.

Before broaching the issue of Kurdish territoriality in the Middle Ages, it is important to stress that this research does not attempt to create a historical continuum nor does it endeavour to justify a contemporary state of affairs and demonstrate Kurdish exclusivity on these territories either today or yesterday. Rather, it accounts for all the elements that permit us to understand a process of categorisation that evolves and changes over the course of a number of centuries. I do not aim to draw the precise limits of a region that was neither ethnically homogeneous nor politically unified. Several non-Kurdish populations (Arabs, Armenians, Assyro-Chaldeans, and Turkmen) lived in that area. It is impossible to determine the exact proportion that each of these groups constituted within the territory as a whole. Although the presence of Kurds in the region does have some political importance during the Middle Ages, the issue of the region's ethnic make-up (i.e. whether or not Kurds constituted a majority in Kurdistan) was not a major political concern until the nineteenth century and the rise of the principle of national self-determination amongst the various ethnic communities. Beyond this caveat, one can state that during the Middle Ages authors were aware of the presence of a relatively discrete space in which populations categorised as Kurdish could be found.

Medieval Arabic sources state that the main Kurdish groups lived anywhere between the Fars region in the east and the Syrian Jazira in the west, and from Georgia in the north to Khuzistan in the south. These same sources also note that the Kurds inhabited a multitude of environments from warm steppe-like deserts to high snow-capped mountains. However, after an overall survey of the sources from the eighth to the fourteenth century, the image that emerges is that of an agro-pastoral population concentrated in mountainous zones.

According to the texts, there was a clear separation within the territory, between a Zagros zone and a western Zagros zone which extended to the Taurus Mountains. Thus, as Vladimir Minorsky and Ismet Cherif Vanly have demonstrated, the Kurds in the region between Hamadan and Hulwan (Zagros) are different from those in the area of Lake Van to north of Mosul (western Zagros).[6] The role played by the western Kurds, including groups such as the

6   V. Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan, B. The Islamic period up to 1920," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 5 : 449-464 and I.C. Vanly, "Le déplacement du pays Kurde vers

Hadhbaniyya, Zarzariyya, Humaydiyya and Julmarkiyya during the Zengid, Ayyubid and Mamluk periods (1130-1340), makes it easier for us to recognise them for what they were (or at least for what they were perceived to be). These Kurds were actors within a historical drama constructed by the authors of the sources themselves, a drama in which the eastern Kurds did not play a significant role.

## 2       Tribal Space and Political Reordering between the Tenth and the Fourteenth Centuries

If one is to take an overview of the perceptions of Kurdish territory in the Middle Ages, especially during the five first centuries of Islam, it extended from Dvin (south of the lake Sevan) in the north to Mosul in the south, and from Hamadan in the east to the Jazira in the west. The presence of powerful Kurdish dynasties in the Zagros region such as the Hasanwayhids in Bahar and the western Zagros zone, Rawadids in Tabriz, and Marwanids in Khilat, is due to the existence of "king-maker" tribes. At the same time, these dynasties had an influence on the populations' make-up and the social organisation of these regions.

It is unnecessary to present a detailed history of the period Minorsky described as the "Iranian intermezzo", namely the period of the rise of Daylami and Kurdish principalities during the tenth and eleventh centuries.[7] Suffice to say, there existed a number of Kurdish dynastic entities: the Shaddadids of the Rawadiyya tribe from the Hadhbaniyya confederacy (from the tenth to the end of the twelfth century) in Azerbaijan and Armenia; the Rawadids who were also related to the Hadhbaniyya (from the ninth to tenth century) in Azerbaijan; the Marwanids who were of Humaydi origin (from the tenth to the eleventh century) in Diyar Bakr and around Lake Van; and the Hasanwayhids from the Barzikani tribe (tenth and eleventh centuries) who ruled over Hulwan, Dinawar, Nihawand as well as the regions of Hamadan and the Shahrazur.

According to the Arabic sources, the field of action of the Kurdish tribes shrunk between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries. Earlier, as indicated by geographers such as Yaqut al-Hamawi (d. 1229) or Shihab al-Din al-ʿUmari (d. 1349), there were still significant zones of Kurdish settlement in Erbil; Tell Haftun; ʿAqr, Shahrazur; the region of Dasht; Qaymur, a fortress near Siirt from

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l'ouest du xᵉ au xvᵉ siècle, recherche historique et géographique," *Rivista degli studii orientali*, 50 (1976): 353-363.

7   Vladimir Minorsky, *Studies in Caucasian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1953).

which came the famous Qaymariyya emirs of Aleppo and Damascus; Fink, which had been ruled by Bashnawiya Kurds since the tenth century; Nusaybin, in the north of the Jazira; Sinjar; and Hisn Talib which was ruled by the Jubiyya Kurds and was close to Hisn Kayfa which was also said to be part of the Bilad al-Akrad during the thirteenth century. During this period, Mosul was still regarded as a major centre of settlement and recruitment of Kurds. If we consider the Zagros zones, we find that in the east, around 1152, the Seljuq Sultan Sanjar created an administrative region called Kurdistan on lands formerly ruled by the Hasanwayhids.[8] Nevertheless, Zengid and Ayyubid historians usually described the western Zagros zone of the tribal territory as being populated with Kurds. However, beginning in the thirteenth century, Suhraward, which constituted part of the northern boundaries of al-ʿIraq, was no longer considered to be inhabited by Kurds, although Shahrazur which was also regarded as lying to the north of al-ʿIraq remained Kurdish. At that time, nothing is said about the Kurds in upper Azerbaijan or Armenia. Tabriz, for example, ceased to be seen as a Kurdish populated region by this time.

The reasons for such a reordering of the Kurdish space are described at length in the sources and can be accounted for by the following factors: 1) the struggle for power with the Armenian and Georgian principalities (and the Khazar before that) in northern Armenia; and 2) the Turkish migrations from the east and new military enlistment strategies, namely the integration of Kurds into the Seljuq and the Zengid armies. We can conclude that the Kurdish principalities and tribes had managed to form a relatively secure political space in southern Azerbaijan and Armenia before the eleventh century. Yet, when the Turkic peoples migrated to these regions en masse in the mid-eleventh century, this political space was undermined and the Kurdish principalities, which had previously held sway in the region, gave way to the establishment of Turkish powers, a process that occurred throughout much of the Middle East.

The establishment of the sovereignty of Turkic imperial states in this region did not, however, mean the physical dispossession of the Kurds. The last manifestation of the efforts of Turkic tribes to settle in the region and the Kurdish resistance to them took place during Saladin's reign in 1186. Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233) writes that a conflict broke out in Zuzan al-Akrad (*zuzān*, literally "summer pastures", of the Kurds) between the Turkmen and Kurds caused by a

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8   The first occurrence of this term appears in the fourteenth-century Persian administrative manual of Hamdullah Mustawfi Qazvini, *Nuzhat al-Qulub*: Hamdallah b. Abi Bakr al-Mustawfi Qazwini, *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat al-Qulub*, trans. and ed. G. Le Strange (Leiden: Brill, 1915), 107-109.

banal wedding quarrel, a conflict which spread out to the Jazira (Nusaybin and Sinjar), the Diyar Bakr region (Amid, Mayyafariqin), Khilat, Bilad al-Sham, the Shahrazur and Azerbaijan.[9] Although the outcome of this conflict is blurry, it is clear that Kurds were not entirely displaced from these lands.

It would be wrong to assume that the Kurdish-Turkish relationship during this period was defined solely by conflict. It is more accurate to say that the relationship was governed by dynamics of both conflict and integration. For instance, during the year 1130, in order to secure the hinterland of their capital of Mosul, the Zengids carried out an offensive against the Kurdish principalities in the region during which the Humaydiyya, the Mihraniyya (Hadhbaniyya) and the Hakkariyya citadels were taken. Although this constituted one of the harshest attempts to take over and control the tribal territory of the Kurds (it paled in comparison to the Mongol invasions during the mid-1200s), the Zengids also started to recruit large numbers of Kurds into their army. This resulted in intensified Kurdish migration into Syria and Palestine, and many of those Kurds who had migrated were to take part in the struggle against the Crusaders.

The Ayyubid period marks the climax of Kurdish integration within the main cities of Syria and Egypt. The process reached the point where the highest religious, administrative or judicial authorities in Egypt could be Kurdish even as late as the Mamluk period (mid-1200s). One obvious indicator of this integration is the presence of distinctly Kurdish quarters (*ḥarat* al-Akrad or *ḥayy* al-Akrad) in many major urban areas of the Near East by the end of the Ayyubid period.

The obvious political humiliation that the Zengid takeover of the Kurdish principalities represented had the paradoxical effect of promoting the emergence of the Kurds, not as a homogeneous and politically unified people within the boundaries of a homeland, but as a people violently entering the *ḥaḍāra* (urban world), which might crudely be defined as the site of "civilization" and the place of economic accumulation. Here we see a phenomenon that fits the "Khaldunian" paradigm, a view of history as cyclical and as driven by the periodic takeover of the *ḥaḍāra* by groups originating in the periphery (*al-badāwa*). These regimes subsequently fall, as these groups slowly lose coherence under the influence of civilized life, and are eventually replaced by

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9    Ibn al-Athir, *Al-Kamil fi al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Abu al-Fida' 'Abd Allah al-Qadi (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1987), 10: 136; Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad, *Al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya wa-l-Mahasin al-Yusufiyya*, ed. G. al-Shayyal (Cairo: al-Dar al-Misriyya li-l-Ta'lif wa-l-Tarjama, 1964), 63; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel Le Syrien,* ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905), 3: 3; Malcolm Cameron Lyons and David Edward Pritchett Jackson, *Saladin: the Politics of the Holy War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 234.

new groups from the edges of that world. The patterns described above suggest the existence of a distinctly Kurdish Khaldunian cycle.

This Kurdish cycle closes with the end of the Ayyubid dynasty, when the Mamluks seized power in Egypt and Syria. With the arrival of the Mamluks we can observe two phenomena. The first is the disappearance of the Kurds as a major military force for the imperial state based in Egypt, especially within the group of high ranking emirs. The second development is the reappearance of the Kurds in their territory thanks to the fall of the Turkmen auxiliary dynasties in the Kurdish region and the new regional balance of power brought about by the rise of the Mongols. Kurdish territory then became a buffer zone because of the political tension and military confrontation between Mamluks and Mongols.[10] The return of the Kurds to the fringes marks the termination of the Kurdish Khadlunian cycle.[11]

I insist on the crucial nature of these spatial and historical dynamics in the understanding of the construction of the categories "Kurdistan" and "Kurd". To put it simply, the Kurds are a people because they enter the historical Khaldunian paradigm as a political and differentiated driving force. During the Middle Ages the word "Kurdistan" or, more properly, "Bilad al-Akrad" (Land of the Kurds), referred to a specific territory which had been shaped by political and social events such as the Turkish migrations or the Zengid military campaigns. It was also a product of literary processes that endeavoured to describe those events and to shape the world's conception of this territorial space.

## 3        Ethnographic Aspects of the Kurdish territory

The Kurdish territory underwent many transformations as a result of a series of violent and destructive forces. Foremost amongst these was the Mongol invasion and the war that broke out between the Mongols and the Mamluks at the end of the thirteenth century. This question remains unanswered: why under these violent circumstances did a specific territorial space carrying the name of the Kurds emerge and last when we might have expected it to become dislocated or obsolete? Two factors explain this unlikely outcome. The first is the

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10      Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260-1281* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

11      The idea that a Khaldunian paradigm surfaces through the Kurdish case in the Middle Ages is inspired by Gabriel Martinez-Gros, the preeminent French expert on Ibn Khaldun and his political thought. See Gabriel Martinez-Gros, *Ibn Khaldoun et les sept vies de l'Islam* (Arles: Actes Sud-Sindbad, 2006).

existence of internal ethnic and political structures which contributed to anchoring a differentiated population in a specific space. Secondly, the policies of the Mamluk Empire aimed at reinforcing Kurdish difference and the Kurdish presence in order to create a buffer zone against the Mongols which, in turn, meant placing Kurds at the vanguard of orthodox Islam. Agro-pastoralism, trade, and warfare were the key elements of the Kurdish political economy which shaped the creation of a Kurdish space.

### 3.1      Territory and Geographic In-betweenness

During the Middle Ages, each of the Kurdish tribes was deeply-rooted in a specific territory. During the Ayyubid period (twelfth through thirteenth centuries) they were easy to locate. According to the thirteenth-century writers, Yaqut, Ibn al-Athir and Ibn Khallikan (d. 1232), the Bashnawiyya were in Fink and its environs, the Hadhbaniyya were in the region of Maragha, the Zarzariyya in Sinjar, the Hakkariyya in the Jabal al-Hakkariyya (the region of 'Imadiyya), and the Humaydiyya in the region of Akreh.[12] In his geographic encyclopaedia, *Masalik al-Absar fi Mamalik al-Amsar* (The visual journey across realms of the capital cities), the Mamluk-era geographer al-'Umari conflates geographic designations with the anthroponomy of the tribes as tribal names appear as geographic landmarks.[13] The author or his informants travelled over the region of Jibal, from east to west, and enumerated the names of the Kurdish tribes found on his route. Passing from one tribe to another, that is to say, from one area to another and moving closer to the Jazira, he writes: "After these [tribe A] we find [tribe B]." The vocabulary used indicates a presumed lack of movement among these tribes, whose members lived (*yaskunūna*), owned (*ladayhim, biyadihim*), governed (*yaḥkumūna*) or were residents (*muqīmūn*) of this or that region. Al-'Umari uses the very words to demonstrate that contrary to the stereotype of nomadic societies, these Kurdish tribes were, in fact, quite rooted in particular places. He even speaks of the territories of some tribes as their place of residence (*masākinuhum*), their countries (*diyāruhum*) or their homelands (*awtānuhum*). The practice of levying the *khafāra* (protection tax, see below) is also a sign of the degree to which each tribe was anchored in a specific ter-

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12      Boris James, *Saladin et les Kurdes; perception d 'un groupe au temps des croisades* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 14-44.

13      Shihab al-Din al-'Umari, *Masalik al-Absar fi Mamalik al-Amsar*, ed. F. Sezgin (Frankfurt am Main: Maʿhad Taʾrikh al-ʿUlum al-ʿArabiyya wa-l-Islamiyya, 1988-2001), 3:124-135.

ritory. Nevertheless, the occupation of a territory by tribes did not mean the total absence of movement and was often linked with a transhumant lifestyle.

As early as the tenth century, thanks to the writings of Ibn Hawqal (d. ca. 978), we learn of the transhumance of the Kurds. At the centre of the map of the Jibal attached to his *Kitab Surat al-Ard* (The book of the surface of the earth) are both the summer and winter pastures of the Kurds (*maṣāʾif al-Akrād wa mashāti'ihim*). This map was reproduced two centuries later in the atlas of al-Idrisi (1154).[14] Despite these cartographic designations, Ibn Hawqal does not comment on transhumance in the section of his work devoted to the Jibal. However, in the chapter on the Jazira, he indicates that the region provided summer pastures for the Hadhbaniyya Kurds and winter pastures for Arabs of Banu Shayban. Similarly, Ibn Hawqal notes that the Kurds of Fars searched for pastures in the mountains during the summer and returned to the plains during the winter. The geographer indicates that only a few tribes did not engage in such a lifestyle. Some apparently contented themselves with "moving within the various lands they owned" without these movements being seasonal.[15]

In the tenth century during Ibn Hawqal's lifetime, seasonal movements prevailed among the Kurds in the Fars region and elsewhere. Mus'ir Ibn Muhalhal indicates that 60,000 Kurdish households (*buyūt*) who had their winter pastures in Shahrazur also lived in this manner. Yaqut, writing during the Ayyubid period (thirteenth century), after reproducing Ibn Muhalhal's words, states, "Today the situation is quite different from what [Ibn Muhalhal] mentioned."[16] This indicates that in the region of Shahrazur, which was then under the domination of the Turkmen Begtikinid dynasty, the "troublesome" Kurdish tribes were no longer herding. They had, instead, moved higher in both altitude and in latitude. Thanks to Mamluk sources, however, we know that they returned to this lifestyle in later periods. There are abundant examples of Kurdish transhumance during the Mamluk period.[17] The sources, especially al-'Umari, describe livestock farming as one of the characteristics of the Kurdish lifestyle, with sheep farming being the most widespread.[18] When another type of livestock rearing was found, it was exceptional enough to be highlighted.[19]

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14      Konrad Miller, *Mappae Arabicae, Arabische Welt- und Länderkarten des 9-13, Jahrhunderts* 2nd part, IV-VI (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, Goethe University, 1994) for maps of Jibal.

15      Ibn Hawqal*, Kitab Surat al-Ard,* ed. J.H. Kramers (Leiden, Brill, 1939), 1: 215, 240, 271.

16      Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1955-1957), 3:375-376.

17      Al-'Umari, *Masalik,* 3: 126.

18      Al-'Umari, *Masalik,* 3: 129.

19      Al-'Umari, *Masalik,* 3: 134, 127.

Concerning the use of pastures, the Kurds were in an intermediary position in between two major nomadic populations: the Arab Bedouins, on one side, and the Turco-Mongol peoples on the other. For several centuries, the Kurdish transhumant population had been grazing their livestock in the Jazira and the Shahrazur during the wintertime. During the summer, the Kurds made way for Arab tribes while moving further northward and eastward into Zuzan, the region north of Mosul near Lake Van. The stability of this organization was broken by the arrival of the Turks in the region around the eleventh century. We have already discussed the conflict that erupted between Kurds and Turkmen in 1186 in the Jazira, Diyar Bakr, Khilat, Syria, Shahrazur and Azerbaijan.[20] As Ibn al-Athir observed, the conflict started in the very heart of the Kurdish Zuzan. Undoubtedly, the reason cited for the conflict (a feud at a wedding) was merely the trigger that prompted a larger conflict fed by the competition of the two groups over the pastures. One century later, the transhumant economy of the Kurds continued even during the troubled times of the Mongol domination of Upper Mesopotamia. The latitudinal organisation of Kurdish herding practices meant that as the Kurds moved northwards so did the Mongols. According to John Masson Smith Jr., the northern regions through which the Kurds travelled during the summer were considered by the Mongols as part of their grazing lands in Azerbaijan, the area between the western edges of the Caspian Sea including Diyar Bakr.[21] However, the Kurdish-populated regions south of Lake Van, east of Lake Urmiya, and up to and including Diyar Bakr were not used by the Mongols for grazing. The seasonal and latitudinal organisation of the pastures prevented any overlap between Kurds and Mongols. The Kurdish winter pastures were too uneven and too dry to maintain a compact army of tens of thousands of horsemen. Diyar Bakr and the region of the Zarineh Rud, to the south of the Lake Urmiya, both of which were winter pastures (*qishlāq*) for the Mongol hoard, were the only areas that the two groups might have come into conflict for. As for the Mongol's summer pastures (*yaylāq*), they were situated to the north in Alataq and beyond, as well as to the southeast in Sughurluk and Siyahkuh near Qom. The Kurds could not have competed for these pastures with the new masters of the region but the Mongols did not seem inclined to move into Kurdish grazing grounds which were unsuitable for their needs.

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20    Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil,* 10: 136.
21    John Masson Smith, Jr., "Mongol Nomadism and Middle Eastern Geography: Qishlaqs and Tümens," in *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy*, eds. Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 45-47.

During the medieval period there were nomadic, transhumant and sedentary Kurds although the long-range nomadism, as that practiced by the Turks, was not an essential feature of Kurdish society. Moreover, many individuals and tribes migrated towards the major cities of the Middle East (Baghdad, Mosul, Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo) as early as the eleventh century. These migrations resulted in the establishment of a Kurdish presence on the outskirts of major cities in which the itinerant or semi-itinerant lifestyle continued or, within the city, where they adopted an urban lifestyle. In addition, the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century provoked massive movement of the region's Kurdish populations to the west, particularly to Syria and Palestine. Not all these migrations were permanent transfers and links with Kurdish regions in the east remained. These populations lived within a polycentric world in which an individual could be attached to the economy, society and politics of major urban centres such as Damascus and Baghdad, while at the same time maintaining a relationship with his tribe, the transhumant economy, and the Kurdish territory.

## 3.2     The Economics of In-betweenness: Agro-Pastoralism and the Warrior Economy

### 3.2.a     *Agriculture, Crafts and Trade*

Alongside pastoralism, Kurds engaged in a variety of economic activities. As we might infer, agriculture was not an activity that classical Muslim historiography puts forward to characterize the Kurds. For al-Jahiz (d. 868), Ibn Hawqal or al-Masʿudi, a Kurd could not be considered a peasant. For these authors, Kurds were only pastoral warriors akin to the Arab Bedouin. Due to the biases of Arabic-writing geographers and those of modern scholars, we tend to exclude a sedentary way of life from the Kurdish reality.[22]  However, the medieval sources allow us to see alternative representations, especially during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Some texts highlight the existence of environments very favorable to agriculture and describe some Kurds as peasants (*fallāḥūn, zurrāʿ*). They also identify many territories owned by well-known Kurdish tribes as consisting of cultivated fields (*mazāriʿ*).[23]  For instance, at the end of the thirteenth century Kurdish peasants of the Jazira were said to be subjected to a tribute by the Mongols in

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22     On representations of the Kurds see James, "Arab Ethnonyms."

23     Al-ʿUmari, *Masalik,* 3: 130, 131.

the meadows of Mosul and Erbil.[24] In *Masalik al-Absar*, al-ʿUmari writes of the Kurdish territories in Jibal: "as a whole[they] are exceptionally fertile, full of cultivated fields and lands, water courses and fruits of diverse varieties."[25]

The primary economic activities described here (agriculture, livestock farming, hunting, and fishing) can result in direct consumption as well as secondary activities such as artisanal production and trade. Thanks to Ibn Hawqal, Yaqut and al-ʿUmari we know that trade had flourished in the region inhabited by Kurds from the tenth to the fourteenth century on. For this purpose, permanent or temporary markets (*awsāq*, bazaars) were established within or outside the main cities of the region as well as in very remote places near the citadels of some tribal groups.[26] These examples demonstrate the possibility of being described as both a peasant, a craftsman or a tradesman, on the one hand, and as a Kurd on the other, a point often neglected by historians who see these categories as mutually exclusive.

The craft industry and trade were stimulated in the regions that concern us by two phenomena, a strong monetization of the economy and the existence of trade routes passing through the Kurdish territory. Thanks to the numismatic work of Judith Kolbas, we know the importance of the monetary dimension of the economy in these regions. Mosul, Mardin, Erbil and, to a lesser extent, Sinjar, Mayyafariqin, Hisn Kayfa (Hasan Keyf), Jazirat Ibn ʿUmar (Cizre) and Siʿird (Siirt) were, at least during the second half of the thirteenth century, important centres within the Mongol Empire for the minting of gold, copper and silver coins.[27] This is not to suggest that a specifically Kurdish coinage existed but that the Kurdish tribes linked to the city were operating within a strongly monetized environment.

It is possible that trade routes encouraged these local economic activities. The caravans that linked Aleppo, Damascus, Mosul and Baghdad to Central Asia skirted around the Zagros to the north and through foothills to the south of Lake Urmiya, towards either the Taurus Mountains or Mesopotamia, right in the middle of the Kurdish regions. According to Stefan Heidemann, from the Seljuq period until the end of the Ayyubid period the merchants frequently took the trade routes between Aleppo, Syria and Iraq thanks to a stable politi-

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24    Pier Giorgio Borbone, "Due episodi delle relazioni tra Mongoli e Siri nel XIII secolo nella storiografia e nella poesia siriaca," *Egitto e Vicino Oriente*. 33 (2010): 223-224.

25    Al-ʿUmari, *Masalik,* 3: 124.

26    Ibn Hawqal, *Kitab Surat,* 2: 217; Yaqut, *Muʿjam,* 1: 137-140; 2: 45; al-ʿUmari, *Masalik,* 3: 131, 132.

27    Judith Kolbas, *The Mongols in Iran. Chingiz Khan to Uljaytu 1220-1309* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 131.

cal situation.[28] Reuven Amitai-Preiss shows that during the Mamluk-Mongol period, even if the merchants could not reach Mamluk territory from Iran, they were providing the regions of Upper Mesopotamia controlled by the Mongols, especially the flourishing city of Mosul, with significant quantities of goods. Not surprisingly, travellers and merchants continued to cross Mosul's Kurdish hinterland.[29]

### 3.2.b    *The Political Economy of Banditry*

Although within Kurdish society there was a diversity of ways of life and economic modes (pastoralism, agriculture and trade), outsiders viewed them as brigands and raiders. The ninth-century litterateur and polemicist al-Jahiz described the Turks as a Bedouin people similar to the Kurds in the following way: "They have one purpose in mind: to conduct raids, plundering, hunting, horse-riding, battling, looting and sowing discord between the lands."[30] According to this line of thinking, raids and plundering were a savage and rudimentary way to make a living.

Banditry was only possible if other groups relinquished to the plunderers what they wanted. In the long run this was not viable in a closed economy. At a local level, the diffusion of such activity results in the flight of all the productive elements of a society (craftsmen, peasants, merchants and livestock farmers). The geographic bottle neck that existed to the south of Lake Urmiya was one of the only ways for the caravans and merchants to cross from Iran to Mesopotamia and Anatolia. The narrow and uneven nature of this territory allowed the Kurds to seize loot and taxes without fear of retaliation from the regional powers who were either uninterested in the problem or unable to solve it. Without accepting uncritically the widespread *topoi* of the Kurds as brigands and looters, a macro-geographic perspective explains the logic and perpetuation of plundering among certain Kurdish elements during the Middle Ages. Many factors were favourable to the rise of a raiding economy. The presence of numerous trade routes crossing the Kurdish territory offered a

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28    Stefan Heidemann, *Das Aleppiner Kalifat (AD 1261): Vom Ende des Kalifates in Bagdad über Aleppo zu den Restaurationen in Kairo* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 35 and Stefan Heidemann, *Die renaissance der Städte in Nordsyrien und Nordmesopotamien, Städtishe Entwicklung und Wirtschaftliche, Bedingungen in ar-Raqqa und Harran von der Zeit der Beduinischen, Vohrerrschaft bis zu der Seldschuken* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 338-339.

29    Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 207-213.

30    The term "bedouin" (*badū*) refers to what Ibn Khaldun and many of his predecessors, such as al-Mas'udi and al-Jahiz, meant: "a condition of civilization that appears under any climate." In other words, it is a lifestyle and not a marker of ethnic difference. See Martinez-Gros. *Ibn Khaldoun.* 56; al-Jahiz, *Rasa'il al-Jahiz* ed. 'Abd al-Salam Muhammad Harun (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji, 1979), 3: 1, 217.

tempting target for potential bandits. At the same time, a specific political and geographical configuration also promoted banditry. As a remote territory consisting of a series of valleys and peaks and constituting both a barrier and gateway between two macro-regions, it allowed raiders to carry out their activities with relatively little risk.

Under the Ayyubids (twelfth and thirteenth centuries), the local domination of the Begtikinid Turkmen dynasty tempered banditry among the Kurds even though Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217) and Yaqut point to the risks incurred by the travellers who dared to pass through the Jazira and the Shahrazur.[31] Both the overthrow of the Ayyubids in Egypt and Syria as well as the on-going conflict between the Mamluks and the Ilkhans helped create a political vacuum which probably triggered the resumption of banditry and plundering at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries.[32] In *Athar al-Bilad wa-Akhbar al-ʿIbad* (Traces of the countries and history of God's bondsmen), al-Qazwini describes the inhabitants of the Shahrazur matter-of-factly as "Kurdish road cutters" (*quṭṭāʿ al-ṭarīq*) or highwaymen, a representation that followed the Kurds throughout medieval historiography and beyond.[33] This remark is indicative of the negative perception of the Kurds among urban elites looking down on the peripheries of their urbane world. It also reflects the wide diffusion in the Kurdish regions of a social, economic, and political order organized around military activities. The persistent image of the Kurd as bandit indicates neither a situation of absolute disorder nor their predilection for informal economic activities but, rather, a social and political economy of war in which the regional powers did not have their say.

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31   Ibn Jubayr, *Rihlat Ibn Gubayr* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1964), 240. Yaqut, *Muʿjam*, 3: 375-376.

32   Significantly, the city of Maragha southeast of the Lake Urmiya in the center of the Kurdish territory was dominated during the twelfth century by the Hadhbaniyya Kurds and then became a Mongol stronghold during the fourteenth century. The Ilkhans probably intended to control this crossing point to Upper Mesopotamia even though they never managed to command the regions located further west and south.

33   Zakariya b. Muhammad al-Qazwini, *Kitab Athar al-Bilad wa-Akhbar al-ʿIbad*, ed. Ferdinand Wustenfeld (Göttingen: n.p., 1848), 266. Such a term is not insignificant as it was a juridical category. *Qatʿ al-ṭarīq* (banditry) is one of the five breaches of Islamic law punishable by *ḥadd* as a "crime against the religion" mentioned in the Qur'an. The culprit was to have the foot, the hand, or the head cut or was to be crucified. Joseph Schacht, *Introduction au droit musulman*, trans. P. Kempf and A.-M. Turki (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1983), 147-151.

### 3.3 The *Khafāra* and Formalization of Banditry Under the Mamluks

During the early Mamluk period (1260-1340) and within the context of this warrior and raiding economy, the collection of protection taxes (*khafāra*) became significant. This system existed before Islam and this tax, also called *ḥimāya*, had long been paid to tribes by unarmed sections of the population in order to insure the security of a region, especially over its roads and cultivated fields. The right to collect this tax was granted by larger political entities to local tribes who controlled a certain area.[34] As for the Kurdish regions, during the Mamluk period, travellers, peasants and merchants had to cross a series of mountain passes (*darband*) held by diverse Kurdish groups who collected the *khafāra*.[35] The *khafāra* was seemingly, in this specific case, a tax collected by the tribes in exchange for the protection of individuals passing through a rugged and dangerous region.

What distinguished banditry from the collection of protection taxes? Claude Cahen suggests that the *ḥimāya* tax was sometimes conceded by an imperial state and at other times usurped by a tribal group. Once usurped, the *khafāra* ceased to be a tax and became mere banditry in the eyes of Arabic-writing geographers. In contrast to banditry, the *khafāra* was an entirely legal and legitimate tax collection mode established in accordance with Islamic law. Al-ʿUmari does not indicate whether or not the collection rights that the Kurdish tribes possessed had been usurped but he notes that tribes who were collecting the *khafāra* were only doing so within the areas under the formal influence of the Mongol Empire and against imperial will. Neither the Mamluk state nor the Mongol state formally granted such rights to the Kurds.

"Protection tax" is essentially a euphemism since the tribes who collected it could assert that the alternative was forcible exaction. Indeed, it was a form of "highwayman taxation" but was not as haphazard as observers in the urban areas of an empire assumed. What Arabic-writing authors invariably interpreted as banditry could also be a local form of tax collection which was not as informal or random as has been thought. We should add that taxes collected by empires were also levied by force. However, the *khafāra* constitutes a legitimisation of banditry and a form of tax collection on the outer edges of imperial civilization. The role of the *khafāra* points to a major paradox within the Kurdish society in which an autonomous military organisation created the

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34    Claude Cahen, "Ḥimāya," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 3: 394-397; Claude Cahen, "Khafāra," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 4: 913; Anne-Marie Eddé, *La Principauté ayyoubide d'Alep (579/1189-658/1260)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999), 334.

35    Al-ʿUmari, *Masalik,* 3: 127, 130, 131, 134.

conditions for a virtually independent political organisation. At the same time, the narratives produced by Mamluk historians and administrators described the Kurds as a force integrated in the Mamluk Empire in the struggle against Mongol "unbelievers" (*kuffār*). Although the reality of Kurdish extractions was complicated, the predilection of Mamluk authors (Syrians and Egyptians alike) to use the term *khafāra* when it came to these "taxes" is part of the narrative depicting a general Muslim front against the Mongol Ilkhans.

## 4      Kurdish Political In-betweenness as Autonomy and Dependence

The question of the autonomy of the Kurdish tribes vis-à-vis the imperial state is one of the underlying aspects of our account. Here the imperial state encompasses those political actors who possess the economic, military, symbolic and political power to radically change or persistently maintain existing social and political structures. It refers to the Seljuq, Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ilkhanid sultanates that constituted distinct political and territorial units and that held a monopoly on the use of legitimate violence. They were able to militarily subjugate the tribes, to co-opt local leaders, to appoint them to specific roles (such as tax collection) and to facilitate tribal restructuring. These imperial states had a significant influence on peripheral societies such as that of the Kurds, although they were facing many obstacles due to the inaccessibility of the border zones and, more importantly, because of the degree of local cohesion and of an internal governing order within the tribes.

For the medieval authors, the Kurdish citadels were remote, inaccessible and impregnable. For instance, Duzdan in Shahrazur, according to Yaqut, "has always been inaccessible to whomever tried to take it (*mumtanīʿa abadan ʿamman yarūmuha*)."[36] Fink, the seat of the Bashnawiyya, which resisted the onslaught of the Zengid atabegs of Mosul around 1130 is described by the same author as also being impregnable (*ḥaṣīna*) and inaccessible (*manīʿa*).[37] Many years later, al-ʿUmari claimed that the Zarzariyya were not paying taxes due to inaccessibility of their settlements.[38] As for the citadel of the Julmarkiyya, he described it as being "one of the most impregnable." He went on to observe that it was "built on a mountain cut by a sheer drop that marked a division in the middle of the region of Jibal. The mountain stands above the waters of the

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36      Yaqut, *Muʿjam*, 3: 375-376.
37      Yaqut, *Muʿjam*, 4: 278.
38      Al-ʿUmari, *Masalik,* 3: 130.

Upper Zab. Armies cannot surround it and arrows cannot reach it."[39] These are just a few examples to be found in Arabic sources showing that the tribes were able to evade and resist the power of the surrounding imperial states, an ability which was aided by geographical factors. We have already seen the existence of an internal order within the Kurdish tribes. The image of the Kurds as outlaws and bandits was due to the fact that they had their own laws which defied those of the Mamluks and the Mongols.

## 4.1    The Internal Kurdish Order and the Unwritten Law of the Tribes

The phenomenon of an internal Kurdish order focuses our attention on feuds and the resolution of intra-Kurdish conflict. First, the segmentation of the Kurdish tribes during the Middle Ages was due to the state of on-going war amongst them. During the long Muslim medieval period, Kurdish tribes often fought each other. Indeed, conflict was central to the function of the Kurdish political economy. However, this system depended on mechanisms for conflict resolution that re-established a balance between contending forces. This system depended on laws of war and peace. War could not be total as its *raison d'être* lay as much in its prosecution as in its resolution. As al-ʿUmari notes when two tribes were at war such as the Zibariyya and the Mazanjaniyya, they were bound to come to terms.[40] The losing tribe would ask for mercy (*aman*) displaying its submission to the other without being obliterated and without losing face. Alliances between Kurdish tribes were also possible, especially in the situation of a struggle against external enemies such as the Turkish Ghuzz during the eleventh century.[41] Cordial neighbourly relations between tribes could also exist, such as between the Markawan, on the one side, and the Zarzariyya and the Julmarkiyya, on the other side, during the Mamluk period.[42] The Julmarkiyya who were not of Kurdish origin "mingled with the local people at the moment of war (*ʿinda istiʿmāl al-baʾs*) trying to establish peace with their enemies (*ṭalaban li-l-salāma min aʿdāʾihim*) … They adopted the Kurdish lifestyle (*inkharaṭu fī suluk al-Akr*ad) and thus lived in peace (*fa-salimū*)."[43] Through al-ʿUmari's text we understand that the Julmarkiyya survived by accepting the local social order and consequently became Kurds.

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39    Al-ʿUmari, *Masalik*, 3: 131.
40    Al-ʿUmari, *Masalik*, 3: 133.
41    Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, 8: 177-178.
42    Al-ʿUmari, *Masalik*, 3: 132.
43    Al-ʿUmari, *Masalik*, 3: 131.

The cycle of tribal war can be explained by two core elements of the tribal ethos: solidarity within the tribe according to a patrilineal organization, on the one hand, and hospitality as well as generosity with the external world, on the other. The solidarity within the tribes implies the participation of all the members in blood feuds. Moreover, the failure of a particular tribe to respect the unwritten code of hospitality and generosity would lead to the violent intervention of other tribes. These core values are easily identified in the geographical texts. Indeed, these principles point to a system of complicated social and political conventions. Despite the importance of the genealogical principle, these conventions are more significant as symbolic frameworks governing the social organization of the Kurds and restricting the possible modification of its foundations.[44] These unwritten rules were also a shield against outside intervention. They were the guarantor of a tribe's autonomy.

Surrounding states, however, subjected the tribes to subtle political pressure and outright intervention. The fact that Mamluk ruler al-Malik al-Zahir Baybars (r. 1259-1277) put administrators and a royal court at the disposal of the chief of the Julmarkiyya, certainly influenced the social and political structures of this tribe. Mamluk administrative activities reinforced the role of the state in shaping the social and political organisation of the Kurdish territory. In order to implement policies to insure its permanence and the extension of its sovereignty, the Mamluk state had to record, classify, as well as appoint administrators and rulers. This was the function of the *dawāwīn* (s. *diwān*), the administrative offices, especially the *diwān al-inshāʾ* (chancellery) which facilitated communication between the sultanate, administrators, and local leaders. During the first half of the fourteenth century, fifty Kurdish emirs, each of them ruler of a principality within the Kurdish territory, were engaged in official correspondence governed by a specific protocol with the Mamluk chancellery.[45] This apparatus both concretely (by providing military and material support) and symbolically (by appointment) institutionalized the status of local leaders who began to look less and less "tribal". Even if the state did not create tribes as some functionalist and evolutionist theoreticians have argued, it certainly con-

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44    Zoltan Szombathy, "Genealogy in Medieval Muslim Societies," *Studia Islamica* 95 (2002): 5-35.

45    Ibn Nazir al-Jaysh, *Kitab Tathqif al-Taʿrif bi-l-Mustalah al-Sharif*, ed. Rudolf Vesely (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1987), 74-81; Abu al-ʿAbbas Ahmad al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-Aʿshaʾ fi Taʿrif Diwan al-Insha*ʾ (Cairo: al-Matbaʿa al-Amiriyah, 1912-1913), 7:285-289.

tributed to the rise of favoured individuals and groups in order to be able to engage the tribal world.[46]

This paradox of "autonomous dependence" within the Kurdish territory reminds us of the power of local political forces to shape geographical space and to name it. At the same time, the state appointed local leaders (in accordance with the local configuration) and named the area over which it intended to exert its sovereignty. Naming a territory is itself a political act.

## 4.2 The Power of Naming: from Zuzan to Kurdistan

Some scholars have asserted that the origin of the word "Kurdistan" can be traced back to the designation of an administrative unit either in twelfth-century Seljuq Iran or in sixteenth-century Ottoman Anatolia.[47] I argue that "Kurdistan" can be traced back far before the Ottoman period, as well as in contexts other than purely administrative ones.

According to the fourteenth-century geographer Hamdullah-i Qazvini (d. 1349), the province of Kurdistan had been created by Sanjar, the Seljuq sultan, in 1152 in the Zagros region formerly ruled by the Kurdish Hasanwayhids. Even if the source is controversial as it was written long after Sanjar's period and given that "Kurdistan" was an administrative designation, it is also possible the word was used to refer to a region where there were many Kurds. During the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries in particular, categories like *velāyat-i Ekrad* (province of the Kurds) were used by Iranian authors to describe the same area.

Even earlier, Arabic-writing authors used several categories to designate the places where the Kurds lived including Zuzan al-Akrad, Jibal al-Akrad, al-Akrad, and Bilad al-Akrad. These categories applied mainly to the region of Diyar Bakr, Lake Van and the hinterland of Mosul, and further to the southeast up to the region of Shahrazur. The Persianate term "Kurdistan" was not used until the Ottoman period to describe the western Zagros regions (eastern Ana-

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46 Morton Fried, "On the concept of 'tribe' and 'tribal society'," in *Essays on the Problem of the Tribe,* ed. Jude Helm, Proceedings of the 1967 Spring Annual Meeting of the American Ethnological Soci*ety* (Seattle: American Ethnological Society, 1968), 3-20; Jurgen Paul, "Perspectives nomades, état et structures militaires," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales,* 5-6 (Sept.-Dec. 2004): 1072.

47 Baki Tezcan, "The development of the use of Kurdistan as a geographical description and the incorporation of the region into the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century," in Kemal Çiçek, Ercüment Kuran, Güler Eren et al. eds., *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation* (Ankara: Yeni Turkiye, 2000), 3: 540-553.

tolia). Earlier Arabic-writing authors would have used instead its Arabic equivalent Bilad al-Akrad or a slightly different term, Zuzan al-Akrad.

For the medieval Arab authors, Zuzan was a specific geographical region in eastern Anatolia inhabited by Armenians and Kurds. Today the word *zozan* refers to the summer pastures in Kurdish. The word also has a similar meaning in eastern Armenian dialects (in Bayazit, Mush, Van, Maratchkert, and Tchatakh, for example). However, according to Ibn Hawqal writing in the tenth century, the ruler (*ṣāḥib*) of Zuzan was al-Dayrani, probably Deranik, the Armenian king of Vaspurakan, located between Lake Van and Mount Ararat.[48] The author does not yet mention a Kurdish presence in that region where Christians apparently made up the greater part of the local population. As for its sovereignty, the ninth-century author al-Baladuri mentions that the patriarch (*baṭrīq*) of the Zuzan had maintained his power over the region in exchange for the payment of the *kharāj* land tax.[49] Three hundred years later, Yaqut in his *Muʿjam al-Buldan* (The dictionary of countries) describes Zuzan as "a region located in the center of the Armenian mountains between Akhlat, Azerbaijan, Diyar Bakr and Mosul. Its inhabitants are Armenians (*ahluha* Arman); there are also some groups of Kurds (*wa-fiha ṭawāʾif min* al-Akrad)."[50] During the same period, Ibn al-Athir states, "Zuzan is a vast region located on the eastern borders of the Tigris River in the region of Jazirat Ibn ʿUmar. It starts two days' ride from Mosul, extends to the boundaries of Khilat and ends in Azerbaijan up to the district of Salmas. There are several fortresses held by the Bashnawiyya and Bukhtiyya Kurds." Ibn al-Athir, who was from that region, even uses the expression Zuzan al-Akrad in *al-Kamil fi al-Taʾrikh* (The complete history), to discuss the place where the late twelfth-century conflict between Turkmen and Kurds began.[51]

The word *zuzan* is most likely a common noun of ancient local origin. The fact that Arabic sources use the term as a proper noun is the result of linguistic borrowing as it is a common noun in both modern Armenian and Kurdish and is mainly used in western Kurdish dialects. Eastern Kurds tend to use the word Köestan (Persian: Kuhestan) which is also mentioned in Arabic sources.[52] This indicates the existence of a distinct geographic region inhabited by Kurds situated further east demonstrating as well a cultural differentiation between Zagros Kurds and those further to the west during the medieval period.

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48    Ibn Hawqal*, Kitab Surat,* 2: 348.
49    Al-Baladhuri, *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan*, 176.
50    Yaqut, *Muʿjam,* 1: 246; 3: 158.
51    Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil,* 10: 136.
52    Yaqut, *Muʿjam*, "Quhistan", 4: 416.

By comparison, the expression "Bilad al-Akrad" is a relatively late category that first appeared during the twelfth century. Although there is no precise description of this region, it generally refers to a western Zagros zone overlapping the Zuzan. The seventeenth-century Syrian writer Ibn al-ʿImad (d. 1679) mentions Bilad al-Akrad in his biographical entry on al-Bashiri who came from Qalaʿat Bashir at the center of the region described as the Zuzan by Ibn al-Athir.[53] Abu Shama (d. 1268) indicated that the Qadi Kamal al-Din ʿUmar b. Bandar al-Tiflisi had been appointed judge in the cities of "Sham, Mosul, Mardin, Mayyafariqin and al-Akrad."[54] Here we see an ethnonym (al-Akrad, the Kurds) being used as a territorial category. Baybars al-Mansuri (d. 1325) also mentions Bilad al-Akrad as well as Jibal al-Akrad (Mountains of the Kurds).[55]

Zuzan was exclusively Armenian (or at least Christian) during the tenth century, while the Kurds were mainly located further east and south in Jibal—which Ahmad al-Yaʿqubi (d. 897-898) referred to as "the domain of the Kurds" (*dār* al-Akrad)—with Fars on the eastern edge of the Zagros mountain chain.[56] At the very beginning of Muslim domination of the region, Zuzan remained under the sovereignty of a Christian patriarch while becoming populated by Kurds as well as Armenians. By the thirteenth century, it was almost always identified as a Kurdish territory. This confirms Vanly's finding that the tribal territory of the Kurds shifted westward between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries to the extent that the demographic make-up of the region had changed.[57] Even if the Kurds did not become the majority in the Zuzan area, it became regarded as Kurdish by their fellow Muslim historians. Thus, the Kurds had been symbolically granted Zuzan 300 years before the Ottomans employed the term Kurdistan to designate this region. In addition, these two designations (Zuzan al-Akrad and Bilad al-Akrad) are primarily political and contain a performative aspect. For the Arab authors of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Armenian region *par excellence* was the area of Sis in Cilicia where Armenian sovereignty in the form of the Kingdom of Levon held sway.[58] Conversely, Bilad al-Akrad did not have any definite Armenian or Kurdish majority nor outright political domination by either of these groups.

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53  Ibn al-ʿImad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab fi Akhbar man Dhahab,* ed. M. al-Arnaʾut (Damascus: Dar al-Kathir, 1991), 7: 423.

54  ʿAbd al-Rahman Abu Shama, *Tarajim Rijal al-Qarnayn al-Sadis wa-l-Sabiʿ* (Cairo: Maktab Nashr al-Thaqafa al-Islamiyya, 1947), 204.

55  Baybars al-Mansuri, *Zubdat al-Fikra fi Taʾrikh al-Hijra,* ed. D.S. Richards (Beirut: Orient Institut, 1998), 329, 352.

56  Vanly, "Le déplacement," 355; Ahmad al-Yaʿqubi, *Kitab al-Buldan* 2nd ed., ed. M.J. De Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1892), 232.

57  Vanly, "Le déplacement."

58  Al-ʿUmari, *Masalik,* 3: 124.

Still, the authors who used this category wished to assert that the area was an exclusively Kurdish political space which is to say, an exclusively *Muslim* space. Although the term Bilad al-Akrad had neither an official nor a systematic usage during the Middle Ages, its use and reproduction did have a role in the designation of this specific region as Kurdistan during the Ottoman period. It is possible that Kurdistan was merely an Iranian synonym for Bilad al-Akrad and may have reflected more local use of the term.

Political factors outweigh others in shaping the Kurdish space and in the perpetuation of this region's designation as Kurdish. Although these conclusions are speculative for earlier periods, the main Mamluk administrative manuals confirm that the intervention of the Mamluk state not only co-opted local polities but also assisted in fixing the name that designated the Kurdish areas of their realm.

## 5        Conclusions

Even though the Kurds ceased to be a major military force within the Mamluk army, they were still considered a distinct group of people. In the geographic encyclopaedia of al-ʿUmari, as well as in the chapter concerning the *mamālik* (countries) in the *Subh al-Aʿshaʾ* (Dawn for the night blind) of al-Qalqashandi, Kurds appear in a separate section, specifically in the sections relating to Jibal. The purely administrative parts of these books, as well as the administrative manuals of al-ʿUmari and Ibn Nazir al-Jaysh, devote whole sections to the Kurdish emirs of the eastern regions including the procedure that was to be followed in writing to them.

The Kurdish emirs with whom the Mamluk chancellery corresponded were supposed to exercise their coercive and political power within the Jibal. Whether it was called Jibal, Jibal al-Akrad or simply al-Akrad, this region was subject to a serious attention by the Mamluk administration. Its population, military potential and economic resources were subject to intense scrutiny. However, we should not forget that the Kurdish territory and the area described as Jibal were officially under Mongol sovereignty during this period (1250-1340). The Mamluks led only a few fruitless raids into these regions. Mamluk writers were eager to show that some Kurdish emirs mentioned in the chancellery's lists held high ranks (*makāna*) within the Mongol Empire. Whose side were they on? The answer is both and neither, since a sovereign Kurdish entity was not feasible. Al-ʿUmari explains the reasons for this his administrative manual, *al-Taʿrif bi-l-Mustalah al-Sharif* (Making known the principles of administration): "[The Kurds] are countless. If the sword of discord was not cutting their

growing sprout and was not preventing their eruption, they would pour into the lands and would seize many goods (*law lā anna sayfa al-fitna baynahum yastaḥṣid qāʾimahum wa yunabbih namāmahum la-fādā ʿalā al-bilād wa-istaḍāfū ilayhim al-ṭarīf wa-l-tilād*). In any case, they are inclined toward disagreement and dissension (*lakinnahum rūmū bi-shatat al-raʾy wa tafarruq al-kalīma*). The sword stands drawn between them, blood stays shed, order remains scorned, eyes are wet and spattered with blood."[59] Hence there was no reason for the Mamluks *not* to claim sovereignty over the Kurdish regions. In many administrative documents, Mamluk writers claim that these were, indeed, Mamluk lands. In the certificate of succession of al-Malik al-Mansur Qalawun to his son, this area, described as "the inaccessible and mountainous realm of the Kurds and its conquests" (*al-mamlaka al-ḥaṣīna al-Akrādiyya al-jabaliyya wa-futūḥātuhā*), is said to be under Mamluk sovereignty.[60] At the same time, we can sense in these few words, as well as in al-ʿUmari's writings, the nature of the Mamluk's Kurdish policy, namely their desire to use a potentially strong but flawed esprit de corps (*ʿaṣabiyya* ) as a weapon to extend the Mamluk realm at the expense of the Mongols. The Mamluk state, contrary to the practice of earlier Middle Eastern polities, offered to reinforce the Kurdish *ʿaṣabiyya*. This policy is symbolized by the creation of the position of Commander of the Kurds (*muqaddam* al-Akrad). The recommendation letter (*waṣiyya*) sent to the *muqaddam* al-Akrad stated that his duty was to unite the Kurds and prepare them for struggle against the unbelievers.[61] This policy was aimed at maintaining Kurdish difference and creating a mechanism to unite and control this differentiated group.

This policy would not have been possible without the specific conditions of conflict in the Kurdish territory. Furthermore, it is not surprising that the Mongols and pro-Mongol historians had a different attitude towards the Kurds. The Mongols did not tolerate any other sovereign over their lands. In theory, all the autonomous tribes were either to submit or were crushed. This is the view that clearly appears in the main sources. The Mongols did not tolerate politicised ethnic differentiation, a point which becomes apparent in the pro-Mongol Persian chronicles. From Rashid al-Din to Vassaf through Juvayni, Qazvini and Natanzi, the Kurds are represented as a mass of bandits. This image of the Kurds as a bandit people is not unusual among medieval historians. The glaring exceptions to this rule are the Mamluk sources. In their presentation of Kurdish

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59    Al-ʿUmari, *Al-Taʿrif b-l-Mustalah al-Sharif*, ed. Samir al-Durubi (Muʾta: University of Muʾta, 1992), 47; al-Qalqashandi, *Subh*, 7:283.

60    Ibn ʿAbd al-Zahir, *Tashrif al-Ayyam wa-l-ʿUsur fi Sirat al-Malik al-Mansur*, ed. Murad Kamil (Cairo: Wazarat al-Thaqafa wa-l-Irshad al-Qawmi, 1961), 202.

61    Al-ʿUmari, *Taʿrif*, 147.

difference, the writers of the Mamluk texts reveal the implementation of a policy of ethnic political and social engineering. By doing so they contributed to the shaping and the formation of a Kurdish space, *al-mamlaka* al-Akradiyya (the realm of the Kurds), a buffer zone that would, to the Mamluk way of thinking, lead to further conquests.

From a macro-historical point of view, it is not surprising that the situation of the Kurdish territory led to the establishment of quasi-independent Kurdish principalities, notably during the Iranian "intermezzo" (tenth to twelfth centuries). The circumstances of in-betweenness and border culture that developed during the conflict between Mamluks and Mongols and continued on during the subsequent confrontations between Mamluks and Timurids laid the foundations for the autonomy granted to the Kurdish principalities by the Ottomans during their conflicts with the Safavids in the early sixteenth century.[62] It also uncovers the circumstances in which the entire region gradually became known as Kurdistan.

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62    Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands, Making a Boundary 1843-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Jordi Tejel, *Syria's Kurds: History, Politics and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 69.

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# Becoming Syrian: Aleppo in Ibn al-ʿAdim's *Bughyat al-Talab fi Taʾrikh Halab*

*Zayde Antrim*

Kamal al-Din ibn al-ʿAdim's thirteenth-century *Bughyat al-Talab fi Taʾrikh Halab* (Everything desirable about the history of Aleppo) is one of the first works to embed Aleppo firmly in what I have called the "discourse of place," an Arabic literary tradition comprised of texts devoted in whole or large part to representing geographical spaces, usually at the scale of the city or region.[1] In the introduction to this voluminous biographical dictionary, Ibn al-ʿAdim (d. 1262) presents a litany of praises for his hometown of Aleppo and a topography of the city and the surrounding area, including many nearby towns and villages. By doing for Aleppo what Abu al-Qasim ʿAli ibn ʿAsakir (d. 1176) had done a century earlier for Damascus in the introduction to the *Taʾrikh Madinat Dimashq* (History of the city of Damascus), Ibn al-ʿAdim asserts for his city an integral role in the discourse of place for the region of "al-Sham," or Greater Syria. However, by identifying Aleppo as the center of a distinctive "catchment area" in the northern part of this region, Ibn al-ʿAdim departs from previous visions of Syrian space that tended to center on Damascus.[2] This chapter uses a close reading of the introduction to the *Bughyat al-Talab* to argue that Ibn al-ʿAdim was one of the first authors to highlight Aleppo's belonging in the region of Syria through an in-depth representation of the city and its surroundings, but that in so doing he also articulates an Aleppan particularism within that regional whole.

Though Aleppo played a large part in the politics of the twelfth century, acting as the power base for the Counter-Crusade led by Nur al-Din ibn Zanki before his occupation of Damascus in 1154 and, after his death, holding the key to Muslim unity in Syrian territories sought by Salah al-Din ibn Ayyub (Saladin), the northern city did not assume prominence in the discourse of place until the consolidation of Ayyubid dynastic power in the first half of the

1  See Zayde Antrim, *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

2  I borrow the term "catchment area" from David Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable and his World: Ibn al-ʿAdīm and Aleppo as Portrayed in his Biographical Dictionary of People Associated with the City* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 6.

MAP 5    Al-Sham in the thirteenth century

thirteenth century. It is easier to explain why representations of Aleppo be-
came important in the Ayyubid period than to explain why they had not been
more noteworthy before. Certainly, Aleppo had merited mention in the Arabic
world geographies of the tenth century as part of al-Sham, the broader region
of Syria routinely invoked as one of the divisions of the Islamic world.[3] The ge-
ographer al-Muqaddasi makes a point of singling out Aleppo as an example of
a capital (*qaṣaba*) that did not bear the name of its district (*kūra*), in this case
Qinnasrin, since Aleppo had long since bypassed the city of Qinnasrin in terms
of size and splendor.[4] As the seat of Hamdanid rule in the tenth century, Alep-
po witnessed the growth of a lively literary culture centered around the court
of Sayf al-Dawla, which was oriented toward the north and the east: militarily
toward the border with Byzantium and politically and diplomatically toward
Mosul and the rest of northern Mesopotamia, known at that time by the re-
gional toponym "al-Jazira." While this period generated its share of panegyrics
for the Aleppo-based regime, most famously in the poetry of Abu al-Tayyib al-
Mutanabbi (d. 955), geographical descriptions tended to focus on al-ʿAwasim
wa-l-Thughur (literally, "strongholds and frontier fortresses"), the borderlands
where raids against the Byzantines were waged, and to express the homesick-
ness so often found wartime situations.[5] The eleventh and twelfth centuries
were also notable for evocations of alienation and displacement emanating
from northern Syria, as in the verse of Abu al-ʿAla al-Maʿarri, a native of the
town of Maʿarrat al-Nuʿman, and in that of later refugee poets from the period
of the Crusades.[6]

In terms of historical writing, one of the earliest, partially extant local
chronicles, the *Taʾrikh al-Mawsil* (History of Mosul) by Yazid ibn Muhammad
al-Azdi (d. ca. 945), emphasizes social and political developments relevant to

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3   See, for example, the chapters on al-Sham in the following tenth-century geographies: Abu
    ʿAbd Allah Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Muqaddasi, *Kitab Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Maʿrifat al-
    Aqalim*, vol. 3 of *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: E.J. Brill,
    1967), 151-162; Abu Ishaq Ibrahim al-Istakhri, *al-Masalik wa-l-Mamalik*, ed. Muhammad Jabir
    ʿAbd al-ʿAl al-Hini (Cairo: Dar al-Qalam, 1961), 43-49; Abu-Qasim Muhammad ibn Hawqal,
    *Kitab Surat al-Ard*, ed. J.H. Kramers, vol. 2 of *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, ed. M.J. de
    Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 165-189.
4   al-Muqaddasi, *Kitab Ahsan al-Taqasim*, 156.
5   For more on the emergence of this frontier zone, see Michael Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence
    and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven: American
    Oriental Society, 1996).
6   See, for examples of this poetry, ʿImad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Kharidat al-Qasr wa-Jaridat al-ʿAsr:
    Qism Shuʿaraʾ al-Sham*, 3 vols., ed. Shukri Faysal (Damascus: al-Majmaʿ al-ʿIlmi al-ʿArabi, 1955-
    1964), 1:76, 96; 2:7, 44, 87, 101. See also Emmanuel Sivan, "Réfugiés Syro-Palestiniens au temps
    des Croisades," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 35 (1967): 135-147.

Mosul and the surrounding area in an annalistic format.[7] However, while the history of Mosul was tied to the history of Aleppo, al-Azdi's work can hardly be described as a representation of Aleppo. Two extant local chronicles from the first half of the twelfth century, the *Ta'rikh Halab* (History of Aleppo) by Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-'Azimi (d. after 1161) and the *Dhayl Ta'rikh Dimashq* (Continuation of the history of Damascus) by Abu Ya'la Hamza ibn Asad ibn al-Qalanisi (d. 1160), each describe events in or affecting the author's city, but al-'Azimi's work is much sparser in details and wider in scope than Ibn al-Qalanisi's.[8] By the end of the twelfth century, an Aleppan scholar, Baha' al-Din ibn Shaddad composed a biography of Saladin, which, though in many ways parallel to the paeans to Saladin authored by his Damascus-based contemporary 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, reflects the perspective of a resident of Aleppo under the suzerainty of Saladin's son al-Zahir Ghazi.[9] From the same period, a monumental universal chronicle, *al-Kamil fi al-Ta'rikh* (The complete [work] on

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7　See Chase Robinson, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

8　In fact, al-'Azimi's work is probably too broad to be labeled a local or city-based history, though the latter part of its narrative, which extends through the year 1143-1144, gives the impression that there was some form of personal contact or correspondence between al-'Azimi and Ibn al-Qalanisi. See Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Dhayl Ta'rikh Dimashq*, ed. H.F. Amedroz (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1908); Ibn al-Qalanisi, *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades*, ed. and trans. H.A.R. Gibb (1932; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 2002); al-'Azimi, *Ta'rikh Halab*, ed. Ibrahim Za'rur (Damascus, 1984); Claude Cahen, "La chronique abrégée d'al-'Aẓīmī," *Journal Asiatique* 230 (1938): 353-448. The slightly later *Ta'rikh Mayyafariqin* by Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi (d. after 1176-1177) is a dynastically-organized chronicle of the town of Mayyafariqin in central Mesopotamia, which starts from the pre-Islamic origins of the city and continues through the author's lifetime. Though not dealing with Syrian space *per se*, this chronicle constitutes more of a self-conscious representation of a city than the other historical works mentioned here. It has been published in two partial editions: Ibn al-Azraq, *Ta'rikh al-Fariqi*, ed. B.A.L. Awad and M. Sh. Ghorbal (Cairo: General Organisation for Government Printing Offices, 1959); Ibn al-Azraq, *A Muslim Principality in Crusader Times: The Early Artuqid State*, ed. and trans. Carole Hillenbrand (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1990). For an analysis of the author's interest in urban architecture, see Chase Robinson, "Ibn al-Azraq, his *Ta'rīkh Mayyāfāriqīn*, and Early Islam," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3, 6, 1 (1996): 7-27.

9　See Ibn Shaddad, *al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya wa-l-Mahasin al-Yusufiyya,* ed. Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal (Cairo: al-Dar al-Misriyya li-l-Ta'lif wa-l-Tarjama, 1964); Ibn Shaddad, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, ed. and trans. D.S. Richards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002). For the most relevant extant works from 'Imad al-Din's oeuvre, see 'Imad al-Din, *al-Fath al-Qussi fi al-Fath al-Qudsi* (Cairo: Mustafa Fahmi al-Kutubi, 1904); 'Imad al-Din, *al-Barq al-Shami*, vol. 3, ed. Mustafa al-Hiyari (Amman: Mu'assasat 'Abd al-Hamid Shuman, 1987); *al-Barq al-Shami*, vol. 5, ed. Falih Salih Husayn (Amman: Mu'assasat 'Abd al-Hamid Shuman, 1987). See also Nasser Rabbat, "My Life with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn: The Memoirs of 'Imād al-Din al-Kātib al-Iṣfahānī," *Edebiyât* 7 (1997): 267-287; H.A.R. Gibb, *The Life of Saladin: From the Works of Imad ad-Din and Baha ad-Din* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

history) by 'Izz al-Din ibn al-Athir (d. 1233), also reflects a northern Syrian point of view, though this time that of a Zankid loyalist from the region of al-Jazira. Ibn al-Athir was sometimes subtly critical of and often markedly unimpressed by the policies of Saladin, especially in contrast to his panegyrists 'Imad al-Din and Baha' al-Din.[10] Thus, the turn of the thirteenth century witnessed the increasing production of historiography from a northern Syrian or Aleppan perspective, but it neither offered explicit representations of Aleppo, nor did it communicate a particular sense of place.

However, the Ayyubid period brought to Aleppo the ideal conditions for an efflorescence of the discourse of place: political stability and prosperity. Ruled by a direct succession of three Ayyubid princes in a seventy-year period, Aleppo enjoyed continuities of policy and patronage virtually unknown in the rest of Syria at the time. Al-Zahir Ghazi, who secured his right to rule the principality of Aleppo from his father, Saladin, in 1186, reigned for thirty years, during which he made significant investments in the city's infrastructure and monumental architecture. At the turn of the thirteenth century, the Ayyubid confederation consisted of a number of principalities with shifting boundaries in Syria, held together loosely under the overlordship of Saladin's brother al-'Adil who reigned in Cairo and Damascus until his death in 1218. After al-'Adil, the Ayyubid dynast al-Kamil stepped into power in Cairo, assuming overlordship of the confederation, while Damascus went through a rapid turnover of rulers, effectively marking the transfer of the center of Ayyubid power from Syria to Egypt. However, until the Mongol invasion of Syria in 1260, Aleppo and its hinterland were held steadily by a son and then a grandson of al-Zahir Ghazi: al-'Aziz and al-Nasir Yusuf respectively. Since both Ayyubid princes inherited power as children, their reigns each involved a period of regency, in the first case by the Atabeg Shihab al-Din Tughril and in the second by the widow of al-Zahir and grandmother of the young prince, Dayfa Khatun. These regencies notwithstanding, the undisputed succession of three generations of Ayyubid princes made Aleppo the center of a relatively independent, stable, and prosperous city-state in Syria.

This political situation created a very different culture of power and patronage in Aleppo than in Damascus. Stephen Humphreys sketches the contrast:

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10    This work has been published in several editions. For an analysis of Ibn al-Athir's critical perspective, see H.A.R. Gibb, "The Arabic Sources for the Life of Saladin," *Speculum* 25 (1950): 58-72; H.A.R. Gibb, "Notes on the Arabic Materials for the History of the Early Crusades," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 7, no. 4 (1935): 739-754. A slightly different critical perspective can be detected in the fragments preserved in later histories of a lost work by Aleppan Shi'ite historian Ibn Abi Tayyi' (d. ca. 1235), who harbored resentment toward Nur al-Din for exiling his father. See Gibb, "Arabic Sources," 58-59.

> [The principality of Damascus] was under siege no less than twelve times between 589/1193 and 658/1260; and in six of the seven periods of serious internal conflict, which the empire suffered after Saladin's death, the prince of Damascus led one of the primary factions. Moreover, Damascus was the only one of the four major Syrian principalities which never succeeded in establishing a stable, uncontested hereditary succession; on six occasions an established prince was driven from the city by his Ayyubid brethren, even when he had an unassailable right to the throne. In contrast the succession in Aleppo was never disputed, although the succession twice fell to very young minors, while Egypt witnessed a successful coup d'état only twice, in 596/1200 and 637/1240.[11]

Spared the contested status and concomitant militarism that rival Ayyubids imposed on Damascus, Aleppo in the first half of the thirteenth century basked in the attention of its ruler and the wealth and influence of its population. In this period, Aleppan notables formed ties of loyalty to their Ayyubid princes reminiscent of those formed in Damascus under Nur al-Din and Saladin decades earlier. While Ayyubid-era Damascenes became increasingly disgruntled with their rulers and looked back to a late twelfth-century golden age of intellectual and architectural patronage, their Aleppan counterparts reveled in their own thirteenth-century golden age.[12] This political situation created the ideal conditions for Aleppo's intellectuals to assert their city's rightful place in the corpus of texts representing Syria and Syrian cities that had acquired critical mass over the past two hundred years.

## 1 Regional Topography in Ibn al-ʿAdim's *Bughyat al-Talab*

Scion of a long line of Hanafi judges, Ibn al-ʿAdim bears the distinction of authoritatively inserting Aleppo into the discourse of place. The author of many works of belles-lettres, history, and biography, as well as a well-traveled diplomat for the Ayyubid court at Aleppo, Ibn al-ʿAdim's life and career are representative of his social context, that of a multi-generational community of notables enjoying the fruits of regional commerce and close ties with the city's

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11 R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: the Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193-1260* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), 11-12.

12 For more on the social structures, architecture, and culture of Ayyubid Aleppo, see Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*; Yasser Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Anne-Marie Eddé, *La principauté ayyoubide d'Alep* (*579/1183-658/1260*) (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999).

ruling elites in the first half of the thirteenth century. This "turbaned class" (*al-muta'ammimūn*) consisted of merchants, officials, and scholars who hailed mostly from Sunni families, though at least one prominent Shi'ite family enjoyed warm relations with the Banu al-'Adim. In fact, it has been argued that Aleppan Sunnis were generally more open to heterodoxy than were the strict Shafi'i and Hanbali circles of Damascus.[13] Ibn al-'Adim's magnum opus, the *Bughyat al-Talab fi Ta'rikh Halab*, a forty-volume biographical dictionary of people connected with Aleppo and northern Syria, may be seen as a celebration of this prosperous and relatively inclusive milieu.

Ibn al-'Adim modeled the *Bughyat al-Talab* on the great city-based biographical dictionaries that had come before, most notably al-Khatib al-Baghdadi's eleventh-century *Ta'rikh Baghdad* (History of Baghdad) and Ibn 'Asakir's more recent *Ta'rikh Madinat Dimashq*. The motivation to compose a work of this type still derived in Ibn al-'Adim's time primarily from the religious field of hadith studies and the need to establish the authority and plausibility of each link along the chain of transmitters passing on a report of the words or deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. While Ibn al-'Adim, to an even greater extent than Ibn 'Asakir, included biographies of individuals outside the ranks of the *'ulamā'*, a loosely-knit group characterized by some expertise in a field of religious scholarship, there is no doubt that he privileged the *'ulamā'* in his selection of entries and that, consequently, his work as a whole characterizes Aleppo as home to a thriving Islamic intellectual tradition. Nevertheless, Ibn al-'Adim's willingness to include a substantial number of biographies of his contemporaries from diverse backgrounds makes the *Bughyat al-Talab* a revealing representation of the broader social context.[14] As a prelude to this, however, Ibn al-'Adim provides a representation that takes into account the distinctions, past and present, sacred and secular, of the geographical area within which Aleppo, during his lifetime, occupied the political, economic, and cultural center.

The *Bughyat al-Talab*, of which only ten volumes survive from the original forty, opens with a volume dedicated to the *faḍā'il* (merits) and topography of this area.[15] Proliferating from the ninth century on, *faḍā'il* treatises, whether in

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13    Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 122-143.

14    Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 6-13, 20-121 (for paraphrases of selected biographical entries). Ibn al-'Adim's biographies paint a portrait of the minutiae of urban life in the same way as the biographies by his Damascene contemporary Abu Shama 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Isma'il; see Abu Shama, *Tarajim Rijal al-Qarnayn al-Sadis wa-l-Sabi'* (*al-Dhayl 'ala al-Rawdatayn*), ed. Muhammad Zahid ibn al-Hasan al-Kawthari (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Malikiyya, 1947).

15    The surviving ten volumes, including the introductory *faḍā'il* and topography, have been published in a critical edition with two volumes of indices: Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat al-Talab*

standalone format or as part of literary anthologies, geographies, or biographical dictionaries, brought together scriptural and poetic quotations, proverbs, legends, and anecdotes praising the exemplary history, sanctity, beauty, or other attributes of a city or region. Generally these collections also included a discussion of the etymology of toponyms, an excursus into the ancient history of the site, an account of its conquest or foundation after the coming of Islam, and attention to its ritual topography, particularly to the locations of its mosques, shrines, and tombs.[16] The prominence in the opening volume of the *Bughyat al-Talab* of the topics associated with *faḍā'il* literature makes it possible to include it in the discourse of place—as a work devoted in whole or large part to the representation of a geographical space in and of itself rather than as a setting or backdrop for something else. By this time an introductory *faḍā'il* compilation was a convention of city-based biographical dictionaries.[17] Ibn al-'Adim's introduction bears structural similarities with and reproduces material from the two-volume paean to Syria and Damascus that opens Ibn 'Asakir's *Ta'rikh Madinat Dimashq*, its century-old predecessor. However, just as Aleppo merits little mention in Ibn 'Asakir's introduction, Damascus merits little mention in the corresponding volume of Ibn al-'Adim's work. In fact, with the exception of one chapter in the middle of the volume proffering a much abridged summary of Ibn 'Asakir's *faḍā'il* treatment for al-Sham, the notion of Aleppo as part of a broader region that includes Damascus hovers only on the edges of the *Bughyat al-Talab*.[18] Rather, what concerns Ibn al-'Adim is, to use David Morray's term, a "catchment area" surrounding Aleppo to which the subjects of his biographical entries and the prestige of his hometown could be tied.[19]

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*fi Ta'rikh Halab*, 12 vols., ed. Suhayl Zakkar (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.). Hereafter this edition will be referred to as "*BT*."

16      In addition to cities and regions, *faḍā'il* treatises were also composed on such subjects as the Qur'an, the Prophet, Arabian tribes, the days of the week, and various foods. See Ernst August Gruber, *Verdienst und Rang: Die Fada'il als literarisches und gesellschaftliches Problem in Islam* (Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz, 1975).

17      See Zayde Antrim, "Ibn 'Asakir's Representations of Syria and Damascus in the Introduction to the *Ta'rikh Madinat Dimashq*," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, no. 1 (2006): 109-129. For earlier city-based biographical dictionaries that include an introductory *faḍā'il*-cum-topography, see the following eleventh-century works: al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Ta'rikh Baghdad*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji, 1933); Abu Nu'aym Ahmad ibn 'Abd Allah, *Kitab Dhikr Akhbar Isbahan*, vol. 1, ed. Sven Dedering (Leiden: Brill, 1931); Ahmad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Razi, *Kitab Ta'rikh Madinat San'a'*, ed. Husayn 'Abd Allah al-'Amri and 'Abd al-Jabbar Zakkar (Sanaa: n.p., 1974).

18      *BT* 1:335-345.

19      Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 6.

This "catchment area" encompassed a substantially wider space than would normally comprise a city and its hinterland in the discourse of place. For instance, *faḍāʾil* literature on Jerusalem usually addressed an area encircling Jerusalem along a relatively short radius and rarely presented material specific to other towns, with the occasional exceptions of Hebron and Bethlehem.[20] Similarly, *faḍāʾil* literature on Damascus covered only the walled city, the suburbs, and the surrounding oasis, consisting of the Ghuta and Mount Qasiyyun.[21] Though these works often included sections dealing with the broader region of al-Sham, they rarely engaged with its subdivisions, and when they did it was only in the form of brief mentions of toponyms, such as "al-Sahil" for the Mediterranean coast. World geographies and travelogues by their very nature traversed multiple regions and thus tended to enumerate subregions, districts, cities, towns, and villages. However, the introduction to the *Bughyat al-Talab* is devoted entirely to the representation of a plot of land on a scale unusual in the discourse of place—bigger than a city and its hinterland, but smaller than al-Sham or the multi-regional panorama offered by geographical literature.[22]

The *Bughyat al-Talab* opens with a relatively short section on the *faḍāʾil* and topography of the city of Aleppo, to which I will return below, and then the majority of the rest of the volume is devoted to a town-by-town, fortress-by-fortress, river-by-river, and mountain-by-mountain inventory of the "catchment area." For each locality, Ibn al-ʿAdim includes contemporary observations of physical features and/or the political situation, historical material, and quotations from earlier Arabic geographical literature. Some sites, such as the towns of Qinnasrin and Antioch, as well as the Euphrates River, receive short *faḍāʾil* treatments because of the significant role they played in the conflicts with the Byzantine Empire over the first three or four centuries after the coming of Islam.[23] Ibn al-ʿAdim also quotes freely from poetry describing the sites and reproduces passages where appropriate from the works of his contempo-

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20    See, for an eleventh-century example, Abu al-Maʿali al-Musharraf ibn al-Murajja al-Maqdisi, *Fadaʾil Bayt al-Maqdis wa-l-Khalil wa-Fadaʾil al-Sham*, ed. Ofer Livne-Kafri (Shafa ʿAmr: Dar al-Mashriq li-l-Tarjama wa-l-Tibaʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1995).

21    See, for an eleventh-century example, ʿAli ibn Muhammad al-Rabaʿi, *Fadaʾil al-Sham wa-Dimashq*, ed. Salah al-Din al-Munajjid (Damascus: Matbaʿat al-Turqi, 1950).

22    One interesting parallel from the discourse of place is the *Sifat Jazirat al-ʿArab* (Attributes of the Arabian Peninsula) by al-Hasan ibn Ahmad al-Hamdani (d. 945). This work is dedicated primarily to a subdivision of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen, which corresponds at least in terms of scale to the subdivision of Syria that Ibn al-ʿAdim focuses on in the introduction to the *Bughyat al-Talab*. See al-Hamdani, *Sifat Jazirat al-ʿArab*, ed. Muhammad ibn ʿAli al-Akwaʿ al-Hawali (Riyadh: Dar al-Yamama li-l-Bahth wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, 1974).

23    *BT* 1:69-77, 79-104, 357-371.

raries and acquaintances, ʿAli al-Harawi and Yaqut al-Rumi, as well as from the accounts of other travelers in the region, such as Ibn Jubayr.[24] In the cases of towns he knew or had visited, he presents firsthand descriptions and occasionally narrates entertaining anecdotes from his personal experiences.[25] Thus, Ibn al-ʿAdim's approach to this "catchment area" reflects a dual perspective, one that gazes backwards at a past landscape of conquest and conflict in northern Syria, specifically the region to the north of Aleppo in the Taurus mountain range dubbed al-ʿAwasim wa-l-Thughur, and one that surveys terrain the author knew personally and often intimately.

The "catchment area" that Ibn al-ʿAdim represents in these pages not only extended beyond Aleppo's immediate hinterland, but also extended beyond the control of the Ayyubid principality of Aleppo. Many of the cities and towns he describes lay, during his lifetime, in the hands of foreign powers or, in the case of Hama for instance, in the hands of other Ayyubid princes. While Ibn al-ʿAdim indicates when and how a certain town or stronghold fell to the Crusaders or Armenians, he does so in an almost perfunctory manner and then proceeds to describe the site as if it were not under a non-Muslim regime. Furthermore, the military activities he alludes to over the past century and a half of the Crusades pale in comparison to those described from the seventh and eighth centuries in which Muslim armies routinely conducted raids into Byzantine territory. One of the reasons for such a backward-looking emphasis on conflict in northern Syria may be that Ibn al-ʿAdim was reserving the more recent events of the Crusades for his historical chronicle, the *Zubdat al-Halab min Taʾrikh Halab* (Crème de la crème of the history of Aleppo).[26] Nevertheless, his favorite sources for material on almost all the sites he mentions are prominent geographers and historians whose works date from the ninth and tenth centuries. In fact, the combined sections on Qinnasrin, a city that had fallen into ruins by the tenth century when the geographer al-Muqaddasi declared Aleppo to have surpassed it in size and importance, and on Antioch, a

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24  Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Jubayr (d. 1217) was an Andalusian traveler who spent two months in Damascus on his way to Mecca for the annual pilgrimage; for his travelogue, see Ibn Jubayr, *Rihla* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1964). ʿAli al-Harawi (d. 1215) wrote a guide to the *mazārāt* (sites of pious visitation) in the Islamic world; see al-Harawi, *Kitab al-Isharat ila Maʿrifat al-Ziyarat*, ed. Janine Sourdel-Thomine (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1953). Yaqut al-Rumi (d. 1229) was an Aleppo-based scholar who composed a multi-volume geographical dictionary of the Islamic world; see Yaqut, *Muʿjam al-Buldan*, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1995).

25  One of the chapters that feature these personal anecdotes deals with the towns of Buzaʿa and al-Bab, in the immediate vicinity of Aleppo, which he visited frequently with his father in his childhood: *BT* 1:269-277.

26  For an oblique reference to this rationale, see *BT* 1:329.

focal point of the early frontier conflicts with the Byzantines and more recent-
ly the seat of a Crusader principality from 1098 until 1268, exceed in length the
sections on the city of Aleppo itself.[27] Thus, Ibn al-ʿAdim's catchment area has
a timeless quality, relatively detached from existing political arrangements and
evoked alternately by centuries-old material and by contemporary observa-
tion.

## 2      Sacred Geography in Ibn al-ʿAdim's *Bughyat al-Talab*

Nonetheless, the representation of his hometown of Aleppo at the beginning
of the *Bughyat al-Talab* is a concise and powerful statement of the city's past
and present relevance to Muslims worldwide.[28] Ibn al-ʿAdim starts by making
a case for Aleppo's prominence in the apocalyptic destiny of the Islamic com-
munity. Though he only presents two traditions in this chapter, he takes up the
theme of eschatology and Aleppo again later in the introduction in a much
more detailed way, borrowing extensively from Nuʿaym ibn Hammad's ninth-
century collection on this topic.[29] The hadith with which he opens the work
quotes the Prophet on the authority of the companion Abu Hurayra (d. 679):
"The Final Hour will not arrive until the Byzantines descend upon Dabiq and
al-Aʿmaq, and then, on that day, an army from the city of the best people on
earth will set out upon them."[30] It goes on to describe the conquest of Constan-
tinople, one of the signs of the imminence of God's final judgment. The events
predicted here recur in varying versions of numerous traditions circulated
from the early Islamic period on, but Ibn al-ʿAdim's main concern is not to
privilege a particular version of the hadith or sequence of events, but to insert
Aleppo into the eschatological narrative. The memory of past conflict with the
Byzantines had been a characteristic feature of the discourse of place on Syria
up to this point, and Aleppo's geographical position would make it a natural
contender in any such future conflict. Along these lines, Ibn al-ʿAdim argues
that Aleppo must be "the city (*al-madīna*) of the best people on earth" from

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27    *BT* 1:69-104 (on Qinnasrin and Antioch); *BT* 1:39-68 (on Aleppo).
28    *BT* 1:39-68. The order of the contents of this volume was reworked by the editor of the
      published edition, as well as by David Morray, based on the dates of the annotation in the
      margins of the Istanbul manuscripts, apparently in the author's own hand. See Morray, *An
      Ayyubid Notable*, 202-205.
29    *BT* 1:39-40, 485-525. See also Nuʿaym ibn Hammad, *Kitab al-Fitan*, ed. Majdi ibn al-Mansur
      ibn Sayyid al-Shura (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997).
30    *BT* 1:39-40, 485-486. Dabiq is a village north and slightly east of Aleppo, and al-Aʿmaq is a
      village between Aleppo and Antioch; see Yaqut, *Muʿjam al-Buldan*, 2:416-417 (Dabiq), 1:222
      (al-Aʿmaq).

which an army would advance upon the Byzantines at the end of time because it is the closest city to the aforementioned town of Dabiq. It would not make sense, he insists, for "the city" (*al-madīna*) in this tradition to refer to the city of Medina in the Hijaz, at a distant remove from the scene of conflict. Furthermore, according to Ibn al-ʿAdim, "Aleppan soldiers have, in every age, been described as persevering, capable, and proven in combat and confrontation."[31] As such, they would certainly qualify in a militarized, apocalyptic context as "the best people on earth."

Further proof for an Aleppan army prevailing over the Byzantines at the end of time is furnished by Ibn al-ʿAdim's commentary on the second hadith he presents, a hadith that had already appeared frequently in the discourse of place. According to the Prophet Muhammad: "A band from my community will remain fighting at and around the gates of Jerusalem, at and around the gates of Antioch, and at and around the gates of Damascus, striving outwardly for the truth, not concerned by those who might forsake them, nor by those who might help them."[32] Again, Ibn al-ʿAdim makes the claim that the "band from my community" of which the Prophet speaks must be the army of Aleppo, since Antioch had historically been the site of contestation between Aleppans and Byzantines and between Aleppans and Crusaders. Ibn al-ʿAdim reasons:

> If the army of Aleppo were not what [the Prophet] meant by "the band" [he] mentioned and if it were not [the army] that did battle in the vicinity of Antioch, discrepancy would penetrate his speech. For the soldiers of Aleppo have always striven outwardly against their neighbors in Antioch in times past, with the exception of rare occurrences, and are still doing so currently.[33]

Thus, Ibn al-ʿAdim opens his biographical dictionary, and his representation of Aleppo, with an interpretation of two Prophetic traditions claiming for the army of Aleppo a privileged role, based on its attested performance past and present, in the future salvation of the Islamic community on earth.

The next two chapters, entitled "A statement that Aleppo is part of the holy land (*al-arḍ al-muqaddasa*)" and "A statement that Aleppo was Abraham's destination of immigration (*muhājar Ibrāhīm*) and that it belongs to the land

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31    *BT* 1:40.

32    *BT* 1:40. See also earlier works that include this tradition, such as Ibn ʿAsakir, *Taʾrikh Madinat Dimashq*, ed. Salah al-Din al-Munajjid (Damascus: al-Majmaʿ al-ʿIlmi al-ʿArabi, 1951), 1:240-257, 292-295 (related traditions 258-262, 296-302); al-Rabaʿi, *Fadaʾil al-Sham wa-Dimashq*, 75 (no. 112), 76 (no. 114).

33    *BT* 1:40.

blessed by God," celebrate Aleppo by virtue of its membership in the broader region of Syria. They both contain variant traditions, mostly taken from Ibn ʿAsakir's *Taʾrikh Madinat Dimashq*, identifying the land "between al-ʿArish and the Euphrates" as "al-Sham," the "holy land," the "land blessed by God," or "Abraham's destination of immigration."[34] Other than the implication that Aleppo indeed lies between the town of al-ʿArish, on the border with Egypt, and the Euphrates River, the only evidence for its membership in the geographical entity being thus described is a passage, uncharacteristic in such a litany of scriptural quotations and exegetical commentaries, from a letter written by the eleventh-century northern Syrian poet, Abu al-ʿAla al-Maʿarri:

> Syria [is made up of] five provinces (*ajnād*), the province of al-ʿAwasim, of which Aleppo and Qinnasrin [are part], the province of Homs, the province of Jilliq, Jordan, and Palestine. These five provinces [form] an auspicious country over which the prophets claim blessings were scattered and the entirety of which they designate as a holy land.[35]

Thus, Ibn al-ʿAdim celebrates Aleppo's explicit membership in Syria in the words of one of its (relatively) recent native sons. Al-Maʿarri brings an authentically northern Syrian authority to the otherwise oft-repeated references to the divine blessings enjoyed by the region between al-ʿArish and the Euphrates.

The final two chapters before Ibn al-ʿAdim turns to his urban topography establish Aleppo, first, as part of a Greater Syria long distinguished as a locus of righteous struggle and, second, as a staging point in its own right for the military conflicts of the seventh and eighth centuries. To substantiate the first

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34    *BT* 1:41-44. See also Ibn ʿAsakir, *Taʾrikh Madinat Dimashq*, 1:129-130, 133 (on Qurʾan 5:21, 7:137, 21:71), 152-153 (on Qurʾan 29:26). Other works in the discourse of place on Syria up to this point also include variants of these exegetical traditions; for examples, see al-Rabaʿi, *Fadaʾil al-Sham wa-Dimashq*, 11 (no. 19); Abu al-Maʿali, *Fadaʾil Bayt al-Maqdis*, 317 (no. 522). For the location and significance of the town of al-ʿArish, see the entry for the town in Yaqut, *Muʿjam al-Buldan*, 4:113-114.

35    *BT* 1:41. *Ajnād* were provincial divisions that may have predated the Islamic conquests, though the sources are late and notoriously unclear. For two different views, see Irfan Shahid, "The Jund System in Bilād al-Shām: Its Origin," in *Bilad al-Sham fi al-ʿAhd al-Bizanti*, vol. 2, ed. Muhammad ʿAdnan al-Bakhit and Muhammad ʿAsfur (Amman: University of Jordan/Yarmouk University, 1986), 45-52; John Haldon, "Seventh-Century Continuities: the *Ajnād* and the 'Thematic Myth,'" in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. 3, *States, Resources and Armies*, ed. Averil Cameron (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1995), 379-423. Jilliq is a toponym used frequently in poetry to refer to Damascus. Yaqut clarifies that it can refer to the Ghuta as a whole, to the city of Damascus proper, or to a village in the vicinity of Damascus; see Yaqut, *Muʿjam al-Buldan*, 2:154-155.

claim, Ibn al-ʿAdim presents traditions quoted in earlier *faḍāʾil* literature asserting that "the people of Syria (*ahl al-Shām*), [including] men, women, children, and slaves, to the farthest limits of al-Jazira," are accorded the status of garrisoned troops (*murābiṭūn*), fighting for the cause of Islam.[36] Again, like the traditions situating the "holy land" between al-ʿArish and the Euphrates, these traditions praise Aleppans in terms of their implied residency in Syria. However, Ibn al-ʿAdim also includes more specific historical material identifying the town of Dabiq as a *ribāṭ*, or frontier fortress. One tradition quotes the Umayyad Caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAziz as saying, while in Dabiq: "We are in a *ribāṭ*."[37] Ibn al-ʿAdim also offers his own historical summary of Dabiq's significance:

> Know that Dabiq has been an assembly point for the soldiers of Islam every summer since the time of Muʿawiya. They used to assemble there and then, when the army was complete and they had collected their allowances, they would embark from the frontier fortresses on jihad against the enemy. This continued during the days of the Umayyads, especially in the days of Sulayman ibn ʿAbd al-Malik…. After the end of Umayyad rule, the cities of the frontier and their citadels came under the authority of the Abbasids, and they inhabited them and fortified them, and they went out on the aforementioned raids from Dabiq and al-Aʿmaq and other towns in the region of Aleppo, especially the Commander of the Faithful al-Rashid….[38]

Ibn al-ʿAdim supplements this summary with passages from the *Futuh al-Buldan* (Conquests of the countries) by ninth-century historian Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri describing the campaigns conducted from Aleppo and its northern marches. Thus, the opening chapters of the *Bughyat al-Talab* represent Aleppo through its membership in the region of Syria and through its proximity to a key historical conflict zone between Muslim and Christian armies, a conflict zone that would retain its significance until the battles of the apocalypse.

Even though Ibn al-ʿAdim draws from much of the same hadith material used in *faḍāʾil* treatises on Syria and Syrian cities up to his time, it is striking that the toponym for Aleppo, "Halab," does not occur in any of the traditions he

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36    *BT* 1:45-46. See also al-Rabaʿi, *Faḍāʾil al-Sham wa-Dimashq*, 10-11 (no. 18); Abu al-Maʿali, *Faḍāʾil Bayt al-Maqdis*, 237-238 (no. 352, variants nos. 351, 353); Ibn ʿAsakir, *Taʾrikh Madinat Dimashq*, 1:269-270.

37    *BT* 1:46.

38    *BT* 1:47.

includes. In fact, the only spot it occurs, other than in chapter headings, is in the aforequoted passage from al-Maʿarri listing the five provinces (*ajnād*) of Syria. This absence may explain Ibn al-ʿAdim's decision to celebrate Aleppo through the representation of a wider "catchment area," since available hadith material could only be associated with Aleppo in terms of the surrounding towns that had been more prominent in the early Islamic period, such as Dabiq, Qinnasrin, and Antioch.

## 3      Urban Topography in Ibn al-ʿAdim's *Bughyat al-Talab*

However, Ibn al-ʿAdim does dedicate a chapter to a description of Aleppo in and of itself. He begins this urban topography with an account of the pre-Islamic construction of Aleppo's walls and then their renovation and expansion under Muslim regimes, singling out Nur al-Din's building projects as well as those of the Ayyubid rulers of his lifetime, al-Zahir Ghazi, the atabeg Tughril, and al-Nasir Yusuf. He follows a similar pattern for the gates of Aleppo, its canals, and, of course, the single most distinctive feature of its topography, the citadel.[39] In each case, the construction patronized by Aleppo's Ayyubids receives the most attention, and Ibn al-ʿAdim often supplements these descriptions with details from his personal observations of and experiences in the structures.[40] This short but specific topography highlights Ayyubid contributions to the city and represents Aleppo through references to its monumental and practical architecture.

Ibn al-ʿAdim then reproduces passages describing the city of Aleppo from earlier geographies and travelogues. He starts with the *Kitab al-Masalik wa-l-Mamalik* (Book of routes and realms), since lost, that the geographer al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Muhallabi (d. 990) dedicated to the Fatimid Caliph al-ʿAziz (reigned 975-996). As this work deals with the second half of the tenth century when Aleppo was the capital of the Hamdanid principality, many of its observations concern Sayf al-Dawla's legacy in the city and reflect a period in which Shiʿism was the dominant religious tradition in northern Syria and, in its Ismaʿili form, in the nearby territories controlled by the Fatimids, al-Muhallabi's

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39    *BT* 1:51-58. For an analysis of Ayyubid building projects and their symbolism in thirteenth-century Aleppo, see Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power*, especially chapter 3 (for the citadel). Ibn al-ʿAdim also discusses building projects in the environs of Aleppo later in the volume; for more on these, see Stephennie Mulder, *The Shrines of the ʿAlids in Medieval Syria: Sunnis, Shiʿis and the Architecture of Coexistence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), chapter 2.

40    See, for instance, *BT* 1:52.

patrons. Ibn al-ʿAdim interrupts this account occasionally for commentary, particularly to clarify the impression a reader might get that Aleppo had always been a Shiʿite city: "[Aleppans'] beliefs in the old days were the same as those of the people of Syria—Sunnism."[41] Only after the destruction of the city, and most of its inhabitants, by the Byzantines in 962 and the subsequent relocation by Sayf al-Dawla of a group of Shiʿites from Harran, a town across the Euphrates to the east of Aleppo, he explains, could the majority of the Aleppan population be described as Shiʿite. Ibn al-ʿAdim then turns to travel accounts featuring Aleppo, such as a letter written by the famous Baghdadi Christian physician Ibn Butlan passing through in 1049 and an excerpt from the journal kept by Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi on his trip with the Abbasid Caliph al-Muʿtadid to Palestine in 885.[42] Ibn al-ʿAdim concludes the chapter with passages from the tenth-century geographies of Ibn Hawqal and al-Istakhri.[43]

While all this material, both historical and contemporary, on the topography of Aleppo is detailed and evocative, Ibn al-ʿAdim's representation of Aleppo as a city ends here, and he devotes most of the remainder of the volume to representations of the individual towns, fortresses, mountains, and rivers of the "catchment area" described above. He returns to Aleppo in a more general manner, however, at the end of the volume in several chapters that deal with its physical situation, climate, pilgrimage sites, and other curiosities. A chapter situating the area around Aleppo in the "fourth clime" according to the longitudinal seven-clime system (*iqlīm*, pl. *aqālīm*) for dividing the world adapted by early Muslim geographers from Hellenistic traditions attributes Aleppo's natural bounty to the fact that the fourth clime sits at the center: "It has been said that it is the most preferable of the seven climes and the one that enjoys the cleanest air and freshest water and that it is the center of the climes and the best of them."[44] Later, he adds other topographical, political, and religious attributes to the central position of Aleppo's clime: "In this clime, there are twenty-two ranges of high mountains and around 212 large, famous cities. This clime is the clime of the prophets and the philosophers because it is the central clime, three to the south and three to the north."[45] He makes a point of the

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41   *BT* 1:60.
42   *BT* 1:61-66. For more on al-Sarakhsi, see Franz Rosenthal, "From Arabic Books and Manuscripts IV: New Fragments of as-Sarakhsī," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 71, no. 2 (1951): 135-142.
43   *BT* 1:66-68.
44   *BT* 1:443. For more on the clime system, as well as other systems for dividing the world, see Antrim, *Routes and Realms*, chapter 4.
45   *BT* 1:444. Ignacio Sánchez and James Montgomery have noted an intriguing textual correspondence between this statement and the epistle "On Geography" by the tenth-century Brethren of Purity; see Ikhwan al-Safaʾ, *On Geography: An Arabic Critical Edition and*

fact that it is Aleppo that belongs to the fourth clime, not the region Syria as a whole, which he divides between the third and fourth climes, after correcting a tradition quoted in Ibn ʿAsakir's *Taʾrikh Madinat Dimashq* that assigns Syria to the fifth clime.[46] Thus, Ibn al-ʿAdim implies Aleppo's superiority over other parts of Syria because of its location on the earth's surface.

Following this chapter with one specifically dealing with the salubrity of the soil, air, and water of Aleppo and the general temperateness of its climate, Ibn al-ʿAdim suggests further favorable comparisons between Aleppo and other Syrian cities. Commenting on a tradition claiming that Alexander the Great requested Syrian soil while ailing in Iraq, Ibn al-ʿAdim asserts:

> I have no doubt that the soil that was procured for him came from the soil of Aleppo or one of its districts (*aʿmālihā*), since we mentioned that this was the advice of Aristotle and since we made clear in the previous chapter that the fourth clime is the center of the climes, with the freshest water, the most temperate air, the best people, and the most wholesome disposition, and the only part of Syria in the fourth clime is Aleppo and its districts.[47]

Thus, Ibn al-ʿAdim elaborates on his judgments about the fourth clime from the previous chapter; its central position makes it the most healthful clime, and the only part of Syria that can claim this virtue is the city of Aleppo and its environs. Furthermore, Ibn al-ʿAdim produces historical anecdotes explicitly comparing Aleppo's wholesomeness to that of Damascus and southern Syria:

> A group of Umayyads chose to settle in the environs of Aleppo and preferred it to Damascus, despite the pleasantness and beauty of Damascus and despite the fact that Damascus was their homeland (*waṭan*), and people only desire [places] other than their homeland if they are better than [their homeland].[48]

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English Translation of Epistle 4, ed. and trans. Ignacio Sánchez and James Montgomery (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2014), 36-42.

46    *BT* 1:448. See also Ibn ʿAsakir, *Taʾrikh Madinat Dimashq*, 1:181.

47    *BT* 1:450.

48    *BT* 1:450.

Here, Ibn al-ʿAdim evokes a recurring tension in the Arabic literary tradition between loyalty to the place of birth or family seat and an adopted home.[49] The choice to leave the homeland and settle somewhere else, in this case Aleppo for reasons of health and climate, establishes the clear superiority of the adopted home.

This section is the only one in the volume explicitly establishing a comparison or a rivalry between the area around Aleppo and the rest of Syria (specifically Damascus and southern Syria).[50] The opening *faḍāʾil* chapters single out Aleppo for distinction in the struggles of the faithful past, present, and future based on its membership in Syria as a whole, rather than based on its superiority to the rest of Syria, although Ibn al-ʿAdim implies that its proximity to the frontier with Byzantium distinguishes it in this context not only from the rest of Syria but also from the rest of the Islamic world. Nonetheless, the key point is that Ibn al-ʿAdim makes the superiority of Aleppo to the rest of Syria absolutely explicit only in the chapter on salubrity and climate. The sections drawing from the conventional hadith material traced back to the early Islamic period and circulated in geographical and *faḍāʾil* literature from the ninth century on represent Aleppo as an integral, rather than superior, part of the region as a whole. The inclusion of selections from this material notwithstanding, the first volume of the *Bughyat al-Talab* cannot be said to participate fully in the hadith-dominated discourse of place that had been established for Jerusalem, Damascus, and Syria by that time. Instead, Ibn al-ʿAdim furnishes information on the pilgrimage sites (*mazārāt*), inscriptions, marvels, and talismans that abound in the city and the wider catchment area to present a particular brand of local sanctity.[51] In the chapters devoted to these subjects, Ibn al-ʿAdim represents space with an eye to day-to-day ritual practice reminiscent of pilgrimage guides like al-Harawi's *Kitab al-Isharat*.

Ibn al-ʿAdim, therefore, owes less to Ibn ʿAsakir than the otherwise similar structure of the *Taʾrikh Madinat Dimashq* and the *Bughyat al-Talab* as city-based biographical dictionaries prefaced by *faḍāʾil*-cum-topographies might suggest. The Aleppan scholar certainly borrows material from his Damascene

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49  For more on the flexibility and transferability of the concept of homeland (*waṭan*), see Zayde Antrim, "*Waṭan* before *Waṭaniyya*: Loyalty to Land in Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Syria," *al-Masāq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* 22, no. 2 (2010): 173-190; Antrim, *Routes and Realms*, chapter 1.

50  Although the title of the chapter in which Ibn al-ʿAdim paraphrases Ibn ʿAsakir's *faḍāʾil* material on al-Sham is entitled "On the merits of Syria, of which Aleppo and its environs have the most abundant proportion," the chapter does not actually include any material establishing the superiority of Aleppo or even mentioning any toponyms from northern Syria; see *BT* 1:335-345.

51  *BT* 1:453-483.

predecessor, especially when citing hadith on the virtues of Syria or on its apocalyptic destiny, but beyond this the *Bughyat al-Talab*'s introduction bears little resemblance to that of the *Ta'rikh Madinat Dimashq* in methodology, organization, or content.[52] Ibn al-'Adim neither claims nor demonstrates the exhaustive mastery of hadith that prompts Ibn 'Asakir to supply numerous versions with full chains of transmission for each tradition quoted. Furthermore, Ibn al-'Adim represents a plot of land on a scale smaller than that of the region of Syria, but larger than that of a city and its hinterland, the two scales most frequently engaged by Ibn 'Asakir and his predecessors. While Ibn 'Asakir's Damascus comes to life in lengthy topographical detail in the second volume of the *Ta'rikh Madinat Dimashq*, Ibn al-'Adim accords his hometown only a brief, though up-to-date, urban topography before moving on to a catchment area extending beyond the political sphere of influence of the Ayyubid principality of Aleppo.

Finally, though Ibn al-'Adim describes, and clearly approves of, the monumental patronage and renovation projects undertaken by the Ayyubid ruler al-Zahir and his successors in Aleppo, there is no direct evidence that the *Bughyat al-Talab* was written at the behest of a particular patron. Unlike Ibn 'Asakir, Ibn al-'Adim never makes any such claim, though the dedication (*khuṭba*) of the work, where such a claim would conventionally be made, no longer survives.[53] In fact, with the exception of the chapter on the topography of Aleppo, the Ayyubid rulers of the northern Syrian principality make few appearances in the introduction to the *Bughyat al-Talab*. Instead, Ibn al-'Adim's representation of geographical space coincides with what David Morray has called "a hoary old quartering that goes back to the first century of Islam."[54] Nonetheless, the *Bughyat al-Talab* was a clear product of Ibn al-'Adim's political context, a

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52  Ibn al-'Adim also reproduces much of Ibn 'Asakir's material on Siffin, though with a different emphasis and seemingly different intentions. Ibn al-'Adim wants to highlight Siffin and its significant role in early Islamic history because of its location within the catchment area surrounding Aleppo and thus presents chapters defending, respectively, both sides of the conflict that occurred on its site; see *BT* 1:284-293, 294-305. Ibn 'Asakir, on the other hand, clearly wants to defend, if not absolve, Syria as a whole from the ignominy associated with the Battle of Siffin and therefore focuses mainly on rebutting the charges lodged against the Syrian people in the wake of the conflict, not on the strengths of the positions taken by either Mu'awiya or 'Ali. See Ibn 'Asakir, *Ta'rikh Madinat Dimashq*, 1:321-334; Zayde Antrim, "Nostalgia for the Future: A Comparison between the Introduction to Ibn 'Asākir's *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq* and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*," in *New Perspectives on Ibn 'Asākir in Islamic Historiography*, ed. Steven Judd and Jens Scheiner (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 9-29.

53  See Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 145. Ibn 'Asakir dedicates his work to the twelfth-century ruler Nur al-Din ibn Zanki; see Ibn 'Asakir, *Ta'rikh Madinat Dimashq*, 1:4.

54  Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 147.

period in which Aleppo and its surroundings attained unity and stability at a nearly unprecedented level for the duration of Ayyubid rule. Furthermore, his well-documented diplomatic missions on behalf of Aleppo's Ayyubid princes implicate him in a far more direct way in political affairs than Ibn ʿAsakir's life of religious scholarship did in Nur al-Din's Damascus. While it is impossible to know why the only passages in the introduction reflecting the contemporary context are his relatively short urban topography and the personal observations scattered throughout the volume, his representation of Aleppo and northern Syria was nonetheless the first of its kind, appearing at a time of political power and economic prosperity. Though it often looks back to the early Islamic period, the *Bughyat al-Talab* is no work of nostalgia. Rather, it is a creative blend of material from traditional hadith sources, from the Arabic geographical and historical traditions, and from the author's firsthand experience of much of the terrain he represents.

## 4       Local History in Ibn al-ʿAdim's *Zubdat al-Halab*

A striking dissimilarity between Ibn al-ʿAdim's introduction to the *Bughyat al-Talab* and the first two volumes of the *Taʾrikh Madinat Dimashq* is that, while Ibn ʿAsakir makes a lengthy history of the conquest period an integral part of his representation of Syria, the Aleppan scholar limits his engagement with historiography to a final series of chapters dealing with the initial Islamic conquests of Aleppo and Qinnasrin and the settlement of various Arabian immigrant groups in the area.[55] It could be argued, however, that Ibn al-ʿAdim's earlier or simultaneous composition of a second work on Aleppo, the *Zubdat al-Halab min Taʾrikh Halab*, may have prompted him to omit other historical material from the *Bughyat al-Talab* to avoid redundancy.[56] The *Zubdat al-Halab*, a history of the city from the pre-Islamic period to the beginning of 1243, brings the contemporary political context to life in a much more direct way than does the first volume of the *Bughyat al-Talab*.[57] Though it starts with the

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55     *BT* 1:527-591.

56     Morray argues that Ibn al-ʿAdim composed the introduction to the *Bughyat al-Talab* by 1257, while he was still residing in Aleppo, but that he probably did not finish composing the biographical volumes until he was residing in Cairo from 1260 until his death in 1262; see Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 169-170. It is most likely that the *Zubdat al-Halab*, which only goes up to the year 1243, was finished before the final versions of any of the volumes of the *Bughyat al-Talab*, though Ibn al-ʿAdim probably undertook the research for both works to a certain extent simultaneously.

57     See the following published edition: Ibn al-ʿAdim, *Zubdat al-Halab min Taʾrikh Halab*, 3 vols., ed. Sami al-Dahhan (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1951-1968).

pre-Islamic foundation of the city of Aleppo and then moves through the Is-
lamic era by means of a dynastic, rather than annalistic, periodization, the sec-
tions dedicated to the first three centuries after the death of Muhammad are
comparatively short.[58] In fact, the *Zubdat al-Halab* remains fairly superficial
until the Hamdanid period of the tenth century.

From the Hamdanid period on, however, Ibn al-ʿAdim's narrative acquires
more detail and focus, until, for the thirteenth century, he demonstrates his
deep knowledge of the political workings of the Ayyubid confederation, par-
ticularly the principality of Aleppo, and exhibits a perspective that contrasts
significantly with that of his contemporaries in Damascus. Unlike the *Kitab
al-Rawdatayn fi Akhbar al-Dawlatayn al-Nuriyya wa-l-Salihiyya* (Book of the
two gardens on the history of the two states of Nur al-Din and Saladin) by the
Damascene scholar ʿAbd al-Rahman ibn Ismaʿil Abu Shama (d. 1266), the *Zub-
dat al-Halab* accords little space to Saladin's reconquest of Jerusalem in 1187.[59]
And unlike famed Damascene Hanbali preacher Sibt ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1256), Ibn
al-ʿAdim makes little of the realpolitik of the Ayyubid rulers of Damascus and
Cairo, particularly in relation to Jerusalem, that so scandalized the Damascene
*ʿulamāʾ*.[60] However, like Abu Shama's *al-Dhayl ʿala al-Rawdatayn* (Continua-
tion of the two gardens) and the relevant sections of Sibt ibn al-Jawzi's *Mirʾat
al-Zaman* (Mirror of the ages), the *Zubdat al-Halab* furnishes rich details of
day-to-day life in a Syrian city. Ibn al-ʿAdim incorporates his knowledge of the
affairs of the Aleppan civilian population, particularly its notable families, into
his account of Ayyubid policies and activities, well-informed by virtue of his
diplomatic career, in northern Syria. To supplement his own experience, Ibn
al-ʿAdim mines a wide range of sources, including northern Syrian Christian
chronicles, which add further local flavor.[61] All in all, the *Zubdat al-Halab* treats
Aleppo in a manner similar to that in which Ibn al-Qalanisi's chronicle treated

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58    Ibn al-ʿAdim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, 1:25-38.

59    Ibn al-ʿAdim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, 3:98-100. See also Abu Shama, *Kitab al-Rawdatayn fi Akh-
      bar al-Dawlatayn al-Nuriyya wa-l-Salihiyya*, 5 vols., ed. Ibrahim al-Zaybaq (Beirut: Muʾas-
      sasat al-Risala, 1997).

60    See, for example, his passing mention of al-Kamil's 1229 treaty ceding Jerusalem to the
      Crusaders: Ibn al-ʿAdim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, 3:205. For the relevant volume of Sibt ibn al-
      Jawzi's incompletely published universal chronicle, see Sibt ibn al-Jawzi, *Mirʾat al-Zaman
      fi Taʾrikh al-Aʿyan*, vol. 8, pt. 2 (Hyderabad: Matbaʿat Majlis Daʾirat al-Maʿarif al-ʿUth-
      maniyya, 1951).

61    See the editor's introduction in Ibn al-ʿAdim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, 1:65. This is also a distin-
      guishing feature of his source base for the *Bughyat al-Talab*; see Robinson, "Ibn al-Azraq,"
      23.

Damascus a century earlier, as a spatial parameter for selecting and prioritizing source material and content.[62]

This type of work, in which the representation of geographical space is at best a secondary enterprise, does not directly fit into the discourse of place, but it may be helpful in providing the greater literary context for the proliferation of other kinds of works that do, such as *faḍāʾil* treatises and urban topographies. When just decades after Ibn al-ʿAdim's composition of the *Bughyat al-Talab* and the *Zubdat al-Halab*, a fellow Aleppan ʿIzz al-Din ibn Shaddad (d. 1285) authored a work entitled *al-Aʿlaq al-Khatira fi Dhikr Umaraʾ al-Sham wa-l-Jazira* (Treasure trove on the subject of the rulers of Syria and the Jazira), the discourse of place on Syria took a new turn. Ibn Shaddad's multi-volume work represents the region of "al-Sham" through topographies of both of its major cities, Damascus and Aleppo, as well as through descriptions of its secondary towns and rural areas, while making its author's loyalty to a regime based in Cairo explicit throughout.[63] Although this standalone topographical history differs in form from Ibn al-ʿAdim's introduction to the *Bughyat al-Talab*, even as it borrows extensively from the earlier work, its unprecedented focus on Syria at a regional scale that gives equal billing to its northern and southern halves could be seen as an heir to Ibn al-ʿAdim's authoritative insertion of Aleppo and northern Syria into the discourse of place. At the same time, the particularism of Ibn al-ʿAdim's "catchment area," a product of the decentralization of the Ayyubid political landscape, contrasts with Ibn Shaddad's greater Syrian particularism, a particularism that would itself contrast with a vision of the combined territories of the Mamluk Sultanate—Egypt, Syria, and the Hijaz—as a renewed *Dār al-Islām* (Abode of Islam) in fourteenth-century works.[64] However, in the second half of the thirteenth century, as the early Mamluk sultans used their prestige from the defeat of the Mongols at the Battle of ʿAyn Jalut in 1260 to consolidate control over Syria, Ibn Shaddad is able to finish

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62  The early twelfth century chronicle by the Aleppan al-ʿAzimi, though one of the sources for the *Zubdat al-Halab*, is so much sparser in detail than Ibn al-ʿAdim's work that it makes a less apt basis for comparison than does Ibn al-Qalanisi's work.

63  See Ibn Shaddad, *al-Aʿlaq al-Khatira fi Dhikr Umaraʾ al-Sham wa-l-Jazira*, vol. 1, pt. 1, ed. Dominique Sourdel (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1953); Ibn Shaddad, *al-Aʿlaq al-Khatira fi Dhikr Umaraʾ al-Sham wa-l-Jazira*, vol. 1, pts. 1-2, ed. Yahya Zakariyya ʿAbbara (Damascus: Manshurat Wizarat al-Thaqafa, 1991); Ibn Shaddad, *Taʾrikh Madinat Dimashq*, ed. Sami al-Dahhan (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1956); Ibn Shaddad, *Taʾrikh Lubnan wa-l-Urdunn wa-Filastin*, ed. Sami al-Dahhan (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1963).

64  See Zayde Antrim, "Making Syria Mamluk: Ibn Shaddād's *al-Aʿlāq al-Khaṭīrah*," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 11, 1 (2007): 1-18; Antrim, "The Politics of Place in the Works of Ibn Taymīyah and Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 18 (2014-2015): 91-111.

what Ibn al-ʿAdim had started, a clear assertion of Aleppo's prominence in the regional entity known as "al-Sham."

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# Lisan al-Din ibn al-Khatib (d. 1374 CE) and the Definition of the Fourteenth-Century Muslim West

*Alexander Elinson*

## 1      Introduction

The fourteenth-century vizier from Granada, Lisan al-Din ibn al-Khatib (1313-74), spent three periods of time in the Maghrib (present-day Morocco), including a period of political exile (1359-62), and left a number of important writings about his time spent there. Over the course of his lifetime he published dozens of books on a wide range of topics from medicine to Islamic mysticism to philosophy to history to poetry. His mastery of Arabic was without peer, and he was an important high government official in the Nasrid court of Granada, as well as a luminary figure in Marinid North Africa. Ibn al-Khatib is not only one of the symbolic figures of Arab greatness in al-Andalus (Muslim Spain), nor only an exemplary literary figure known for his vast range of knowledge and abilities. In a broader sense, he, his writings, and the reception of those writings can be viewed as representative of the intellectual climate of the western Muslim world (al-Andalus and the Maghrib) in the fourteenth century, an interesting and vibrant moment in Arabic letters on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar.

As a high government official in the Nasrid court, Ibn al-Khatib was a key figure. During the time he spent in the Maghrib, specifically at the Marinid court in Fez, Ibn al-Khatib corresponded and crossed paths with some of the greatest luminaries of medieval intellectual life including the intrepid traveler Ibn Battuta (d. 1368 or 69), the courtier Ibn Marzuq (d. 1379), the important Sufi figure Ibn ʿAshir (ca. 1300-62), and the famous historian Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) to name but four.[1]

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1   Lisan al-Din b. al-Khatib, *Nufadat al-Jirab fi ʿUlalat al-Ightirab*, ed. Ahmad Mukhtar al-ʿAbbadi (Casablanca: Dar al-Nashr al-Maghribiyya, 1985), 137 (Ibn Battuta); 129, 163, 166, 190 (Ibn Marzuq), 379 (Ibn ʿAshir); 131-136 (Ibn Khaldun). See Ibn Khaldun, *Rihlat Ibn Khaldun* (also known as *al-Taʿrif bi-Ibn Khaldun wa-Rihlatuhu Gharban wa-Sharqan*), ed. Muhammad b. Tawit al-Tanji (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2009), 82, 99-120. This book is the last part to his monumental historical work, *Kitab al-ʿIbar*.

MAP 6    Al-Andalus and the Maghrib in the fourteenth century

Ibn al-Khatib composed three geographically-themed narratives during the time he spent in the Maghrib. These are: *Nufadat al-Jirab fi ʿUlalat al-Ightirab* (Shaking the dust off the rucksack: on finding comfort while traveling abroad), *Mufakharat Malaqa wa-Sala* (Boasting match between Malaga and Salé), and *Miʿyar al-Ikhtiyar fi Dhikr al-Maʿahid wa-l-Diyar* (The choice measure: an account of various homes and abodes). Each of these works represents a distinct genre: the first one an official travel account in the Maghrib from the point of view of a highly educated and urbane government functionary from Granada; the second a literary debate (*mufākhara*, *munāẓara*) the goal of which is mainly rhetorical (clearly and eloquently arguing two sides of an issue); and the third a *maqāma* (a work of rhymed prose) that features a weathered traveler eloquently describing and comparing Andalusi and Maghribi cities, focusing on the cities' positive and negative attributes.

Each example conforms to certain genre-specific conventions and goals, and in each one, Ibn al-Khatib capitalizes on his rhetorical and stylistic skills to compare, contrast, and unite al-Andalus and the Maghrib. In this chapter, I will discuss these three travel narratives in order to evaluate Ibn al-Khatib's unique position in the Muslim west. In addition to highlighting interesting aspects of these essays in terms of content and form, I will examine points of geographic overlap that will allow an investigation of Ibn al-Khatib's discussions of a number of cities according to genre in order to show that his descriptions of place and shifting definitions of al-Andalus and the Maghrib problematize the separation between the two at a time when al-Andalus, once at the center of the Muslim west, was, by the fourteenth century, being relegated to the periphery. When viewed together, these works demonstrate Ibn al-Khatib's comfort literarily within the Arabic tradition, and geographically in a Muslim west that consists of the Maghrib and the last Muslim holdout of Nasrid Granada and its environs.

Ibn al-Khatib's geographically-themed writings from his time spent in the Maghrib provide important sources of information on Maghribi and Andalusi cities and also allow us a broader view of the political and intellectual climate the writer inhabited. Ibn al-Khatib lived in a transitional moment when the western and northern borders of the Arabic literary universe were moving south once and for all from al-Andalus to the Maghrib. By examining these writings, I will discuss the ways in which Ibn al-Khatib deftly blurs the boundaries that exist between the two locations. In the travelogue *Nufradat al-Jirab,* Ibn al-Khatib invites positive comparisons between cities and sites in al-Andalus and those in the Maghrib. He lavishes praise on the hospitality of his hosts, seeks out the resting places of deported (and departed) Andalusi figures, and composes a public plea to the Marinid sultan for employment. In this text, we

see the foundations of a multi-genre literary project that progressively blurs the divide that historians take for granted between the Iberian Peninsula and the northwestern corner of Africa. Using the conceit of a debate, in *Mufakharat Malaqa wa-Sala* the parallels he draws between Malaga in al-Andalus and Salé in the Maghrib are apparent if subtle. Where scholars project a modern view of division between al-Andalus and the Maghrib based on the current distinction between Spain and Morocco, I argue for a nuanced perspective born of fourteenth-century realities and the literary conventions that Ibn al-Khatib uses. The last text analyzed here, *Mi'yar al-Ikhtiyar*, is based on the *maqāma* form wherein the genre requires that al-Andalus and the Maghrib be treated without favoritism. Together, these texts mark a shift from a time when Andalusis were disdainful of their co-religionists in the Maghrib. At the same time, my reading of these texts defies modern assumptions about the divide separating opposite sides of the Strait of Gibraltar.

## 2      Biography

Ibn al-Khatib lived during the period of Nasrid rule over Granada (1238-1492), which was to be the last period of Arab-Muslim rule in the Iberian Peninsula that had begun in the year 711. Despite the end that was on the horizon, this period gave rise to some of the most impressive architectural, literary, and intellectual monuments of the period of Arab-Muslim rule, probably the most notable and conspicuous of which is Granada's Alhambra palace. The beginnings of this palace preceded the Nasrids, but it was really this last Muslim dynasty in the Peninsula that created the masterpiece of art and architecture that can still be visited today. Occupying one of the hills overlooking the city, the Alhambra is an architectural and artistic masterpiece; it is beautifully adorned with intricate stuccowork, garden layouts, and calligraphic inscriptions—Quranic and poetic, including poems by Ibn al-Khatib and his contemporaries.[2] It was here where Ibn al-Khatib would spend most of his professional life, and for which he would pine while living in exile in the Maghrib.

He was born in 1313 in Loja (about fifty miles from Granada) into a family of Arab notables and was appointed vizier and head of the chancery at a young

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2   Maria Jesus Rubiera Mata, "Los Poemas Epigráficos de Ibn al-Yayyab en la Alhambra," *Al-Andalus* 25 (1970): 453-73; Cynthia Robinson, "Marginal Ornament: Poetics, Mimesis, and Devotion in the Palace of the Lions," *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World* 25 (2008): 187-214.

age, responsible for fostering diplomatic ties between Nasrid Granada and the Marinid Sultan in Fez, as well as other heads of state. The fourteenth century was a period of struggle between the Marinids who represented the dominant power in North Africa at the time, the Nasrid rulers of Granada who were desperately trying to hang on to their kingdom, and the Christian kingdoms of Spain. In his official functions as a secretary and diplomat, Ibn al-Khatib played a key role in all of these relations. As a traveler and litterateur of the first order, he experienced, articulated, and defined the Muslim west in creative ways that I will discuss below.

He was known as *dhū al-wizāratayn*, "the holder of two government portfolios" (The pen and the sword; or the civil and the military). He also held the informal title of *dhū al-ʿamrayn*, "the one with two lives," for his official government work during the day, and the prodigious literary and scholarly output that he produced, supposedly at night.[3] For now, I would add another sobriquet to these, *dhū al-ʿudwatayn*, or "the man of the two shores"—al-Andalus and the Maghrib. Ibn al-Khatib was an active participant in the intellectual culture of the western Mediterranean on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar in the fourteenth century. In keeping with his dualized nicknames, the writings that I will examine in this chapter are also organized dualistically, treating al-Andalus and the Maghrib, either implicitly or explicitly, as distinct *and* intertwined constituents of western Mediterranean culture.

## 3       Feasts and Tombs: Official Travels in the Maghrib

In 1359 the Nasrid sultan Muhammad V al-Ghani bi-llah (d. 1391) was deposed by his half-brother, and he and his retinue (including Ibn al-Khatib) took refuge in the Marinid capital of Fez where the sultan, Abu Salim (r. 1359-61), received them graciously. While in the Maghrib, Ibn al-Khatib traveled extensively before settling down for a two-year period in the Atlantic city of Salé, receiving a monthly stipend of five hundred silver dinars from the Marinid sultan. It was during this time of pleasant repose, far from the political problems of Granada and the government entanglements and responsibilities of Fez, that Ibn al-Khatib wrote his travel/geographic works.

*Nufadat al-Jirab* includes a relatively straight-forward account of Ibn al-Khatib's travels in the Maghrib to Mount Hintata, Aghmat, Marrakech, Dok-

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3  Al-Maqqari, Ahmad b. Muhammad, *Nafh al-Tib min Ghusn al-Andalus al-Ratib*, ed. Ihsan ʿAbbas (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1968), 5: 80.

kala, Azemmour, Asfi, and Salé.[4] The essay includes official and highly stylized poems and letters, as well as clear expressions of admiration on the part of the author during his travels. In many ways, this work falls neatly within the generic confines of *riḥla* (travel) accounts that describe places that are wondrous and strange, as well as somewhat familiar, focusing, as they generally do, on travels within *dār al-islām* (Islamic domains), and within a certain political, social, and intellectual milieu.[5]

According to his station and the form in which he writes, Ibn al-Khatib allows us a glimpse into the otherwise closed world of traveling dignitaries, with all of the pomp and social graces that go along with it. This world is largely unknown to most regular folk, and at the same time somewhat familiar to any traveler welcomed into a Moroccan home. The world he describes is both strange and familiar, and the way he constructs his description is dramatic and evocative. Consider the following example.

Upon his arrival at Mount Hintata not far from Marrakech, he is met by "supporters and allies of the Marinid state" following which he addresses the chief of the region, Amir b. Muhammad 'Ali al-Hintati, in conventional laudatory fashion.[6] The following day, Ibn al-Khatib approaches the mountain itself and begins his ascent. When he is near the top, he is met by a group of galloping horses at the head of which rides another dignitary, 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Muhammad al-Hintati.[7] Praise is given in lofty and eloquent terms and then, finally, Ibn al-Khatib arrives at what seems to be the most important thing here, perhaps the most interesting thing he did that day, a lengthy description of the welcome feast offered to him and his companions. He writes (and I quote the long passage in full in order to get a good taste):

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4  Although a scribal note on the manuscript claims that *Nufadat al-Jirab* was written at the end of Ibn al-Khatib's life during his third and final stay in the Maghrib, Ahmad Mukhtar al-'Abbadi dates it earlier, to the second period spent in the Maghrib, 1359-62. See Ibn al-Khatib, *Nufadat al-Jirab*, 4. For a discussion of the entire work's contents, see Laila M. Jreis Navarro, "Cartas y Noticias de Ambos Lados del Estrecho: El Universo Jatibiano a Través de la *Nufadat al-jirab*," *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos-Sección Árabe*, 62 (2013): 83-106.

5  Abderrahmane El Moudden, "The ambivalence of *rihla*: community integration and self-definition in Moroccan travel accounts, 1300-1800," in *Muslim travelers: pilgrimage, migration, and the religious imagination*, eds. Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 69-84; 'Abd al-Rahim Moudden, *Adabiyyat al-Rihla* (Casablanca: Dar al-Thaqafa, 1996); Roxanne L. Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) especially chapter one "Frontiers: Walls and Windows—Some Reflections on Travel Narratives," 1-19.

6  Ibn al-Khatib, *Nufadat al-Jirab*, 44-5.

7  Ibn al-Khatib, *Nufadat al-Jirab*, 46.

the moment we stopped, and the flint had been struck, food from the sea flooded in and waves of it crashed down. It was amazing, and I gazed at the cheerfulness and abundance before me. There were large bowls overflowing with *tharīd* dripping with grease, and fatty lamb meat piled on top of that. There were tables collapsing under so many things, swimming with sturdy, gilded dishes; each one with a different look, containing delicious food, wonderfully spiced, the choicest of the three forbidden fruits (meat, musk, and wine). Then came all manner of fish and fowl… then dessert, then the exchange of stories and histories.[8]

Beyond bland descriptions of the protocol accompanying an official visit, Ibn al-Khatib provides us with a vivid description of a generous meal offered by his hosts. The passage is notable for its sumptuousness, and the meal provides Ibn al-Khatib the opportunity to engage in flights of literary description as well as serving as high praise for the people of Hintata and their chief, ʿAbd al-ʿAziz b. Muhammad al-Hintati. However, as van Gelder notes, while the passage is "highly rhetorical," it is not rhymed like the rest of the essay and "[t]he very absence of the expected *sajʿ* [rhymed prose] lifts the piece out of the ordinary, as if to stress the normality of the lavishness of the food and the pleasantness of the conversation, which turned around local history."[9] Rather than simply saying the Hintatis received him generously, he allows us, like himself, to be buried in their generous hospitality, a hospitality that is noteworthy, yet not out of the ordinary in this context. Ibn al-Khatib provides vivid descriptions of landscape, a sumptuous feast, and praise for his hosts according to protocol and form, all the while using a language and style that is familiar, and dramatic. Moreover, while attempting to curry favor with the Hintatis and, by extension, the Marinids, he describes a world outside of Granada in the mountains of southern Morocco that is opulent and wondrous. As a whole, while the Arabic in this essay cannot be characterized as stylistically simple, it *is* remarkably easier than the extremely ornate and complicated language Ibn al-Khatib is known for, which is chock full of allusions from a variety of scholarly fields and linguistic pyrotechnics. In fact, Ibn al-Khatib's writing is some of the most difficult Arabic writing there is, quite a feat in a literary tradition that often prides itself on its complexity and exclusivity. The style of this essay (at least when he is not quoting his own stylized official writings) and of this feast description in

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8   Ibn al-Khatib, *Nufadat al-Jirab*, 47. The prophet Muhammad is said to have compared his favorite wife ʿAʾisha to *tharīd* saying she is "superior among women just as *tharīd* is superior among dishes." Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, "Atʿima" (70) no. 25, quoted in Geert Jan van Gelder, *God's Banquet: Food in Classical Arabic Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 25.

9   Van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 69.

particular, is relatively accessible, and serves to underline the passage and emphasize the meal's extravagance. Whereas in many travelogues there are aspects of the fanciful and exaggerated, on this journey Ibn al-Khatib writes of his experiences that are breathtaking and familiar at the same time.

After Mount Hintata, Ibn al-Khatib visits the town of Aghmat located about twenty miles southeast of Marrakech and, as he describes it, the town's glories lay in its past. It served as the first capital of the Almoravid dynasty (r. 1040-1147), before the newly founded city of Marrakech assumed that role in 1070.[10] After describing the "minaret without peer among the world's architecture," the "stately" mosque, and the city's gardens and parks, Ibn al-Khatib laments that "no city had ever reached a similar state of destruction as has this disheveled widow, whose beauties have faded, whose clothes have become worn out, and whose civilization has become wild."[11] Remaining with an eye to the past, and to his home in al-Andalus, Ibn al-Khatib speaks excitedly of when the town's preacher "told [him] of those deposed Andalusi kings and princes who ended up there such as al-Muʿtamid b. ʿAbbad (of Seville, d. 1095) and Abu Muhammad ʿAbdallah b. Buluqqin b. Badis (of Granada, d. 1095)."[12]

The tomb visit is an essential stop on a traveler's itinerary. While visiting graveyards is not, of course, a strictly Muslim practice, it is important to appreciate the centrality of the tomb pilgrimage (*ziyāra*) to the *riḥla* account, especially in the Maghrib, as Eickelman describes in his study of contemporary Moroccan Islam:

> The most striking feature of North African Islam is the presence of marabouts... They are persons, living or dead, to whom is attributed a special relation towards God which makes them particularly well-placed to serve as intermediaries with the supernatural and to communicate God's grace (*baraka*) to their clients. On the basis of this conception, marabouts in the past have played key religious, political and economic roles in North African society, particularly Morocco.[13]

The tomb visit not only allows the pilgrim to draw upon the *baraka* of saints, holy men, and other important religious and cultural figures, but it also connects the visitor's present to the past and allows him to reflect and compare the present to the past.

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10    Ronald Messier, *The Almoravids and the Meanings of Jihad* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010), xxi.
11    Ibn al-Khatib, *Nufadat al-Jirab*, 55, 56.
12    Ibn al-Khatib, *Nufadat al-Jirab*, 56.
13    Dale Eickelman, *Moroccan Islam* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), 6.

Ibn al-Khatib's first and main stop is al-Muʿtamid's tomb "located in the cemetery … outside of town up on a hill" and he pays his respects to "the prince of Homs (i.e. Seville), Cordoba, and Algeciras, including the lands to its west."[14] Al-Muʿtamid was the last of the Taifa kings before being imprisoned in Aghmat by the Almoravids in 1091. He was a great patron of the arts and poet who was celebrated during his reign (r. 1069-91), and mourned after his imprisonment and death (d. 1095) by some of the greatest poets of the Taifa period including Ibn ʿAmmar (d. 1086), Ibn Hamdis (d. 1133), and Ibn Labbana (d. 1113).[15] Al-Muʿtamid is remembered by poets and historians as a real literary and cultural force of the eleventh century, and symbolically as the apogee of high Arab culture in al-Andalus before that culture's decline with the arrival of the Almoravids, and then Almohads.[16] Ibn al-Khatib joins the list of panegyrists for al-Muʿtamid, and honors him with a poem that begins:

> Out of obedience I visited your tomb in Aghmat,
>     Seeing that as the most important of duties.
> Why wouldn't I visit you, O most giving of kings,
>     O lantern that lights the darkest nights?[17]

While in the cemetery, he also visits "the graves of saints and other pious men," capping his visit with a stop at the grave of the Sufi scholar Abu ʿAbdallah Muhammad al-Hazmiri.[18]

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14      Ibn al-Khatib, *Nufadat al-Jirab*, 57.

15      James T. Monroe. *Hispano-Arabic Poetry: A Student Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Raymond P. Scheindlin. *Form and Structure in the Poetry of al-Muʿtamid ibn ʿAbbad* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974); William Granara. "Ibn Hamdis and the Poetry of Nostalgia," in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: The Literature of al-Andalus*, eds. María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin, and Michael Sells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 388-403.

16      The cultural divide between the Taifa period and the later Berber Almoravid and Almohad periods is perhaps best encapsulated in the (likely apocryphal) anecdote that tells of the poetry contest that was held in the Almoravid Ibn Tashfin's honor when he took control of the Iberian Peninsula in 1091 after imprisoning al-Muʿtamid. Ibn Tashfin was unable to understand the poetry composed for him and was forced to ask for an explanation from al-Muʿtamid. It is important to keep in mind that stories of the decline of Arab culture with the fall of the Taifa kingdoms may be overstated, but the persistence of that narrative points to a perceived shift that is difficult to ignore.

17      Ibn al-Khatib, *Nufadat al-Jirab*, 57.

18      Ibn al-Khatib, *Nufadat al-Jirab*, 58. Al-Hazmiri was author of *Ithmid al-ʿAynayn wa-Nuzhat al-Nazirayn fi Manaqib al-Akhawayn Abi Zayd wa-Abi ʿAbdallah al-Hazmiriyyayn*, ed. M. Rabitat Ed Dine (Rabat: n.p., 1985-86), a hagiographical work about the Hazmiri saints of Aghmat. See Juan José Sánchez Sandoval, "La Literatura Hagiográfica en el Magreb Occidental (siglos XII-XIV)" *AM* 8-9 (2000-2001): 11-35.

A strikingly imaginative passage comes when Ibn al-Khatib reaches the end of his journey and returns to the city of Salé. While there he visits the Chellah located in present-day Rabat, a site dating back to Roman times that became a Marinid necropolis, and where the Marinid Sultan Abu Hasan (d. 1348) is buried.[19] In this passage, Ibn al-Khatib tries to gain the approval and patronage of the current Sultan Abu Salim by imagining what his dead forbearer might say about him. Seeking what is essentially a job recommendation from the dead, Ibn al-Khatib stands next to the "holy tomb" and addresses Abu Salim, saying:

> I inclined my ear to his grave and my heart received what was revealed to it by the silent tongue, as if [Sultan Abu Hasan] himself were saying to me: "Say to your lord, my son: This Ibn al-Khatib standing at my grave grieving for me was the first of anyone to eulogize me, compose poetry for me, glorify me, weep for me, pray for me... My dear son, this man has told me that he has had all his money taken from him. He has many children and he is weak of body, old age having taken its toll. It is his hope to be close to me and to be sheltered as my ward, in my service... and to serve God under your holy protection and mine... I thought you could use him however our dear and sincere friend, the great secretary Abu 'Abdallah b. Marzuq sees fit. Ask him, he will tell you."[20]

After going on in this way for a bit more, Ibn al-Khatib then launches into direct praise of the Sultan Abu Salim. This creative address proved effective for Abu Salim responds positively: "We grant, in the entirety of your request and your complete desire, the favor of our speech with what is your right, and work with what is your due."[21]

*Nufadat al-Jirab* is essentially a pastiche of geographical/travel descriptions that includes official letters and panegyric poetry addressed to Marinid officials and other high-ranking figures. The language is stylized and imaginative, yet elegant and clear at the same time. It is valuable not only for the information it provides about the places and people Ibn al-Khatib visited while travelling around the Maghrib, but it also presents a Maghrib that is both wonderful and new and comfortably familiar. Thus, Ibn al-Khatib presents a place that is distinct from his home in Granada, yet not completely unknown. According to the *riḥla* genre, the traveler leaves his home, but not entirely, remaining within

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19    H. Basset and L.E. Provençal, *Chella, une nécropole mérinide* (Paris: Emile Larose, 1923); 'Ali Abi Zar', *Al-Anis al-Mutrib bi-Rawd al-Qirtas fi Akhbar Muluk al-Maghrib wa-Ta'rikh Madinat Fez*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhab Binmansur, 2nd ed. (Rabat: al-Matba'a al-Malakiyya, 1999), 62.

20    Ibn al-Khatib, *Nufadat al-Jirab*, 81, 82-83.

21    Ibn al-Khatib, *Nufadat al-Jirab*, 87.

the familiar confines of *dār al-islām* and the official and scholarly environment that the traveler moves in. During his three years in the Maghrib, Ibn al-Khatib remains exiled from Granada, all the while making a home in the Maghrib that in many respects rivals his Andalusi home.

## 4       Ambivalently Separating al-Andalus and the Maghrib

In his *Mufakharat Malaqa wa-Sala*, Ibn al-Khatib seems to be presenting a clear distinction between the place he had left behind in al-Andalus, and the Maghrib where he resides while composing this work. The geographical division of the Muslim west between north and south implies a statement of the distinctiveness of each side of the strait, but I do not think this divide is so clearly defined by Ibn al-Khatib. In looking at two similarly bifurcated works, *Mufakharat Malaqa wa-Sala* and *Miʿyar al-Ikhtiyar fi Dhikr al-Maʿahid wa-l-Diyar*, I propose a reading that treats the texts as complementary rather than separate from one another in order to highlight what I see as Ibn al-Khatib's ambivalent view of al-Andalus and the Maghrib as completely separate entities.

In this work, Ibn al-Khatib chooses the debate form proper (*mufākhara*) to compare the cities of Malaga and Salé.[22] This formal choice would seem to affect the contents of the epistle and the descriptions and comparisons made by the author; while surely inspired by observation, experience, and personal convictions, one would expect that these observations are also defined by the literary genre in which they are couched. The *Mufakhara* follows a conventional debate style where the narrator, who claims expertise and impartiality "due to the fact that [he] lived in both places and saw what was there," agrees to a request from an unnamed petitioner to "compare the two cities of Malaga and Salé to determine which is preferable."[23] However, this narrator is anything

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22      John Mattock, "The Arabic Tradition: Origin and Developments," in *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East: Forms and Types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literatures*, eds. G.J. Reinink and H.L.J. Vanstiphout (Leuven: Departement Orientalistiek, Uitgeverij Peeters, 1991), 153-163; Geert Jan van Gelder, "The Conceit of Pen and Sword: On an Arabic Literary Debate," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 32, no. 2 (Autumn 1987): 329-360; Ibrahim Geries, *Un genre littéraire arabe: al-maḥāsin wa-l-masāwī* (Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1977) and *A Literary and Gastronomical Conceit: The Boasting Debate Between Rice and Pomegranate Seeds* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002); W. Heinrichs, "Rose versus narcissus: observations on an Arabic literary debate" in *Dispute Poems* eds. Reinink and Vanstiphout, 179-198; van Gelder, "Arabic debates of Jest and Earnest," in *Dispute Poems* eds. Reinink and Vanstiphout, 199-211.

23      Ibn al-Khatib, *Khatrat al-Tayf: Rahalat fi al-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus 1362-1347*, ed. Ahmad Mukhtar al-ʿAbbadi (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashr, 2003), 57.

but impartial. In fact, he states his preference from the start, and as a result, the treatise is less a debate from both sides of an argument than a point-by-point assertion of Malaga's superiority. He begins:

> Malaga is too much more important, too much more famous, too much more illustrious, too much more well placed, its inhabitants too much more generous, and it is too much more widely sought after to trade boasts and arguments, or to place in opposition to or compete [with Salé].... However, I will fulfill your request.[24]

He specifies the criteria for comparison—defense (*al-man'a*), artisanal skill (*al-ṣan'a*), location (*al-buq'a*), fame (*al-shuna'a*), dwellings (*al-masākin*), culture (*al-ḥaḍāra*), architecture (*al-'imāra*), historical sites (*al-athāra*), and grace and splendor (*al-naḍāra*)—and proceeds to compare the two cities according to each. It comes as no surprise that Malaga is superior in each of the nine categories.

Ibn al-Khatib shows his hand from the beginning and does not present a fair argument for the two cities. Praise for Malaga is consistently longer than Salé's blame, yet he is inconsistent with the length he accords Salé, sometimes going into great detail in censuring the city, and other times providing little more than a quick brush-off. For example, in the argument on defense (*man'a*), Ibn al-Khatib criticizes Salé at length:

> Salé, as you know, has miserable walls; its barriers are poor for defense and resistance. Floodwaters weaken them; their only hope is repair. Its fortress is attached to the city, and from the point of view of fortification, it shirks its responsibility. It has a single wall, without balustrades to protect it. Its gate is exposed, no shield to defend it. The water there is bad, and it does not have a known well, nor a spring with sweet water. In recent times, the Christians took possession of it in broad daylight.[25] No perceptible hand responded, there were no war machines used, nor did any factions vie for the crown. It has a paucity of arms, an absence of prosperity, decrepit walls, and its affairs are in disarray.[26]

Other times, however, he has nothing to say at all about Salé. Consider his comparison of artisanal skill (*ṣan'a*) in the two cities:

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24    Ibn al-Khatib, *Khatrat al-Tayf*.

25    A reference to the Spanish occupation under King Alfonso X (d. 1284) that lasted for 24 days in 1260. See Shihab al-Din Muhammad b. Khalid al-Nasiri, *al-Istiqsa' li-Akhbar Duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqsa*, (Cairo: Bulaq, 1894), 2: 11.

26    Ibn al-Khatib, *Khatrat al-Tayf*, 59.

Malaga, may Allah protect it, has silk brocades embroidered with gold; it is the source of choice leatherwork, pottery desired in other places, and muslin for wrapping around oneself; it is the place where copper is worked, equivalent to the Yemeni city of Sanaʿa in terms of clothing manufacturing, and as a place of pilgrimage for merchants to fill up their bags before returning home. The perceptions of both man and jinn all testify to this fact. The rising sun could not deny it.

And what craft does Salé have to offer, to support itself with, to export to distant lands, or to adorn itself with during holidays?

Now that the superiority of artisanal skill has been established, let us move to the matter of location (*buqʿa*)....[27]

It is surprising that a writer as skilled as Ibn al-Khatib does not accord Salé equal treatment to Malaga, if only in denigrating it. After all, as van Gelder points out in his discussion of the *mufākhara* (boasting match) genre:

The author, even if he is partial himself, at least pretends to present a more or less impartial and unbiased description of a debate and should be able to show both the positive and the negative sides of each contestant.[28]

Ibn al-Khatib has chosen to compare the two cities according to a debate format that, at least according to convention, necessitates an equal treatment of the competing sides. Ibn al-Khatib, a writer who is surely capable of such a task, does not do so, and makes little effort to balance praise and blame of the two cities. Thus, it would appear that, on the surface, he is homesick, patriotic, and clearly favoring al-Andalus over the Maghrib.

Indeed, Rachel Arié asserts that in the *Mufakhara*, Ibn al-Khatib "exudes an Andalusi patriotism that relies on the tradition of al-Shaqundi."[29] However, it appears that Arié projects a reading onto the treatise according to what she expects given Ibn al-Khatib's Andalusi roots, without carefully considering the genre he has chosen, and the way he actually executes it. Ahmad Mukhtar al-ʿAbbadi expresses a similar notion when he points out how odd it is that Ibn

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27    Ibn al-Khatib, *Khatrat al-Tayf*, 59.

28    Van Gelder, "The Conceit of Pen and Sword," 331.

29    Rachel Arié, *L'Espagne musulmane au temps des Nasrides (1232-1492)* (Paris: Éditions de Boccard, 1973), 449. Al-Shaqundi (d. 1231 or 1232) wrote a famous treatise entitled *Risala fi Fadl al-Andalus* (*Treatise on the superiority of Andalusia*). See Alexander E. Elinson, *Looking Back at al-Andalus: the poetics of loss and nostalgia in medieval Arabic and Hebrew literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 134-142.

al-Khatib treats Salé so negatively, "despite his love for the Maghrib, specifically Salé, where he sought refuge in times of trouble."[30] While Ibn al-Khatib does treat Salé in almost completely negative terms, it is not as surprising for the reasons that al-ʿAbbadi cites. It is the unevenness of the argument that is surprising rather than the negativity toward Salé for a certain amount of negativity would be expected, albeit a negativity equal to that toward Malaga. Al-ʿAbbadi concludes that Ibn al-Khatib is simply expressing "nationalistic feelings" and that "these feelings go back to an age old and traditional competitive spirit which existed between Andalusis and Maghribis, which we have seen clearly in al-Shaqundi's epistle."[31] Both Arié and al-ʿAbbadi assume that Ibn al-Khatib views al-Andalus and the Maghrib as clearly opposed entities that can easily be separated, whereas I think that separation should not automatically be assumed and determined by a twentieth-century view of the western Mediterranean region that seeks to draw a clear line between Spain and Morocco. In the fourteenth century, Ibn al-Khatib would be less willing and able to do so, despite appearances to the contrary. It is true that Ibn al-Khatib seems to overtly favor Malaga over Salé, but it is a reluctant favoritism, couched as it is in a debate format. In order to further consider the question of favoring one place over the other, it is relevant to look at another of his treatments of Andalusi and Maghribi cities.

*Miʿyar al-Ikhtiyar fi Dhikr al-Maʿahid wa-l-Diyar* is in the form of a *maqāma*, a rhymed prose literary genre first initiated in tenth-century Persia which became a popular literary genre across the Arab-Muslim world into the nineteenth century. The genre is notable for its elevated language that tends toward dazzle more than truth. Also, it is important to note the close connection between the *maqāma* and other geographical writings; both genres appeared around the same time in the tenth century, and travel is a key component of both, as is description of various cities, their luminaries and strange happenings.[32]

*Miʿyar al-Ikhtiyar* was, like the *Mufakhara*, written while Ibn al-Khatib was living in Salé, and it too presents descriptions from al-Andalus to the Maghrib in a stylized manner. The first part takes place at an inn and is comprised of an old traveler's descriptions of a number of Andalusi cities as told to a young man who asks about each one. In the second part, the same young man happens across an eloquent old man in the marketplace telling of his fantastic

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30    Ibn al-Khatib, *Khatrat al-Tayf*, 19.
31    Ibn al-Khatib, *Khatrat al-Tayf*, 11.
32    Abdelfattah Kilito discusses the connection between the *maqāma* and geographical writing in his monograph on the *maqāma*: *Les Séances* (Paris: Sindbad, 1983), 20.

adventures. The younger man asks him about the cities of the Maghrib and a
series of descriptions follows. It is not until the end of the old man's discourse
that the youth recognizes the old traveler of the first part of the treatise, "the
shaykh, his traveling companion, and his jug of wine; he had disguised himself
with watered down coloring."[33]

The eloquent old man has traveled extensively and delivers an exhaustive
treatment of Andalusi and Maghribi cities. As he says in his preamble, these
cities are "just like the earth's inhabitants: heterogeneous, differing in length
and breadth, describable by their beauty and by their ugliness."[34] He goes on to
describe each city as such, in both positive and negative terms. For example,
the traveler asserts that Salé is

> a most favorable place… combining the best aspects of both rural and
> urban. A source of cotton and linen, it has religious schools, hospitals, a
> Sufi lodge like a garden, and a river with multiple branches… It's got great
> juice and excellent markets for Ethiopian slaves… The Bouregeg River
> splits the city in two, completing its beauty, with Rabat and its fortress on
> the other side.

That said, he goes on to describe Salé's less redeeming qualities:

> The water there does not provide for the traveler; it is neither sufficient,
> nor is it cold, and in fact, it's pretty lousy. The mosquitoes there attack like
> lions, attaching themselves to you like a nursing child who has yet to be
> weaned; they buzz in your ears and they can kill with one thrust of their
> stinger.[35]

Even the Marinid capital of Fez possesses both positive and negative attributes.
The old man notes that

> its soil brings forth wealth… The children of Sam and Ham meet there,
> and it is great in terms of harmony and union. Its streets are never free of
> crowds, its stones are crushed to dust because of that, and its bakeries are
> always full. Its languages are many and varying and its libraries are over-
> flowing.

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33    Ibn al-Khatib, *Khatrat al-Tayf*, 111.
34    Ibn al-Khatib, *Khatrat al-Tayf*, 67.
35    Ibn al-Khatib, *Khatrat al-Tayf*, 101.

However,

> the heat of this city melts. Wolves live there and its streets are rough...
> The people there view themselves haughtily as the best of the best... [to
> the point where] a man of Fez might not even invite another into his
> home, or give him food or oil.[36]

When the traveler arrives at Granada, Ibn al-Khatib's own home, seat of the
Nasrid dynasty, and the last remaining city of al-Andalus, it is good to be sure,
but not perfect. It is

> [a] most splendid capital city. The sun there is above praise. It is greater
> than any idle talk; beyond any lover or detractor... If it were any more
> beautiful, it would be completely indescribable... It is made up of many
> villages and farms, surrounded by cattle... It is encircled by walls like
> bracelets... Its many towers adorn the sky... and the air exudes sweet per-
> fume, making all believers think of paradise.
>     However, by God, its cold weather extinguishes the heat of life and
> prevents the lips from returning a greeting. Its prices make those who
> consider them think they are a sham... Its streets are showing wear, they
> do not allow things to be carried on them... neighbors are not good to one
> another and there is a dislike of visitors. The houses are falling down and
> wood and unslaked lime are expensive.[37]

In any *maqāma*, there is a good amount of literary convention and hyperbole
at work, but what is interesting here is the simple fact that al-Andalus and the
Maghrib are forced by genre to be treated as equals. With the bifurcated struc-
ture of the text (two speakers, two sets of cities, each with positive and nega-
tive attributes) al-Andalus and the Maghrib can be considered similar in their
differences.

    Compare this to earlier periods of Andalusi history when Andalusis could
not say enough about how superior they were to the rest of the Muslim world,
especially the Maghrib. Prior to Ibn al-Khatib's time, Andalusis from the jurist
and poet Ibn Hazm (d. 1064) to the Jewish poet Ibn Ezra (d. after 1138) to
the belle-lettrist al-Shaqundi (d. 1231 or 1232), praised al-Andalus over all
other places. All of these boasts about Andalusi superiority were composed
after some sort of loss—political, cultural, or personal. All of these writers

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36    Ibn al-Khatib, *Khatrat al-Tayf*, 109.
37    Ibn al-Khatib, *Khatrat al-Tayf*, 86-8.

indirectly lamented their fate as Arab intellectuals whose culture was facing severe crisis, by producing Andalusi-Arab centric works.[38] Perhaps by the fourteenth century, it was too late for that, and Ibn al-Khatib sees fit to write about al-Andalus and the Maghrib in ways that do not fully reveal any sort of "Andalusi superiority" that may have been clear or necessary two or three centuries prior. Through imaginative modes of writing in his descriptions of place, Ibn al-Khatib demonstrates his literary prowess while at the same time providing shifting definitions of al-Andalus and the Maghrib. He problematizes the separation of the two in a transitional period when Arab high culture in the western Muslim world was becoming centered in Marinid North Africa, with al-Andalus being relegated to the margins as a symbol of past greatness.

## 5 Fez

Although the focus of this chapter is primarily Ibn al-Khatib, it is also important to view his relationship to the Marinid capital city of Fez, and the city's importance during the fourteenth century. The Marinids who ruled over what is now Morocco from the early 1200s to 1465 played a key role in solidifying the importance of Andalusi-Arab culture as an important component of Moroccan identity—an identity that is a hybrid of Berber, European, Muslim, Jewish, and other roots. Ibn al-Khatib was not the only luminary to pass through the Marinid court during the fourteenth century. Contemporary to him and present at the court in Fez were other well-known intellectuals: the famous traveler Ibn Battuta from Tangier, Ibn al-Hajj al-Numayri (d. 1367) from Granada, and Ibn Khaldun from Tunis, to name just three.

During the middle part of the fourteenth century, particularly during the reigns of the Marinid Sultans Abu al-Hasan (r. 1331-1348) and his son Abu 'Inan (r. 1348-1358), Fez flourished. Abu al-Hasan patronized all manner of scholarly production and religious public works, and Abu 'Inan was an important patron and supporter of intellectual pursuits, as well as a scholar, calligrapher, poet and prose stylist in his own right.[39] However, despite periods of cultural flowering, the Marinid era was a rocky one and, from the beginning, a major issue the Marinids faced was that of legitimacy. The Marinids were pastoral Berbers who were likely first drawn into the far Maghrib by pasturage and booty without a clear ruling ideology. When they assumed control of Fez and adopted it

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38    Elinson, *Looking Back*, 117-142.

39    Mohamed Benchekroun, *La vie intellectuelle marocaine sous les Mérinides et les Watta-sides, XIIIe, XIVe, XVe, XVIe siècles* (Rabat: n.p., 1974), 39-45.

as their capitol, they faced opposition, or at least suspicion, from the established religious scholars (*'ulamā'*) who saw the Marinids as uneducated, uncultured, and not particularly pious. To counter these suspicions, the Marinids undertook a program of support for religious institutions such as *madāris* (residential religious colleges) and *zawāyā* (Sufi lodges), and patronized all manner of scholarly activity until the city, in terms of learning and culture, "[takes] over from the Andalusi cities whose heritage it claimed."[40]

The connection between Fez and al-Andalus is personified by Ibn al-Khatib himself and he continues to occupy an important place there, with schools, streets, and hospitals bearing his name. In fact, although he spent just a few years in the Maghrib during his lifetime, it would be in Fez where he met his death and was buried. For political, theological, and personal reasons, Ibn al-Khatib fell out of favor with the sultan Muhammad V and his court in Granada and sought refuge in Fez in 1371. It was there that he was arrested and killed in prison. He was stabbed to death, then dismembered and burned outside of Fez's Bab al-Mahruq (Gate of the Burned One, so named for *another* corpse that was defiled there some centuries before).[41] As a result of this twice-over killing, Ibn al-Khatib posthumously acquired the nickname *dhū al-mitatayn* (the one who died two deaths) to add to his other doubly connotative names; he had wanted to be buried in Granada's cemetery so add yet another, *dhū al-qabrayn* (the one with the two graves). His tomb, which has recently undergone extensive renovations jointly funded by the Spanish city of Loja, where he was born, and Fez is adorned with one of Ibn al-Khatib's last poems, an elegy to himself composed while in prison just before his assassination:

> We travel far away, although the dwellings are near.
> Although we have a message to deliver, we are silent.
> Our breath ceased suddenly,
> As if a prayer was followed by a silent recitation.
> Once we were great, but we have turned into a stack of dry bones,
> We used to feed others, but now we ourselves are worm food.
> We were like shining suns high up in the sky that travel high in the sky,
> But these suns have set and are lamented by the other stars.
> How many warriors armed with sharp-edged swords

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40 Halima Ferhat, "Marinid Fez: Zenith and Signs of Decline," in *The City in the Islamic World,* eds. Salma K. Jayyusi, Renata Holod, Attilio Petruccioli and Andre Raymond (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 1: 247-268; Maya Shatzmiller, "Les premiers Mérinides et le milieu religieux de Fès: L'introduction des Médersas," *Studia Islamica*, 43 (1976), 109-118.

41 Al-Maqqari, *Nafh al-Tib*, 5: 104-112.

Were shot down by a rain of sharp-pointed arrows?
And how many lucky ones
Were suddenly done in by their good fortune?
And how many young noblemen, who used to don the royal robe,
Were placed in their grave wrapped in rags?
So, tell his enemies: "It is true that Ibn al-Khatib is gone,
But is there anyone who will not one day die?"
And those of you who are gladdened by this news,
Say: "Only he who thinks he will never die can be happy on a day like this
    one!"[42]

The joint renovation, much celebrated by both the cities of Fez and Loja, recalls the narrator's words in *Mi'yar al-Ikhtiyar* as the old man comes to the end of his description of Maghribi and Andalusi cities. The narrator says: "He joined his fingers with mine and said: 'Don't allow your work to come to naught, or your hopes to be dashed….' Then he whacked the side of his donkey, entered the crowd, and left me looking at his tracks. Thus, everything that was once joined together must be scattered apart."[43] These concluding words that evoke both the unity and separation of al-Andalus and the Maghrib indicate a mixture of optimism and pessimism that is not surprising coming from a man who lived through a tumultuous period, and who was ultimately assassinated in Fez on the order of one of his best students, Ibn Zamrak (d. 1393). Nonetheless, Ibn al-Khatib can be viewed as a model of erudition whose time in the Maghrib gave him the opportunity to experience places beyond his home in Granada, and to view them as comparable to it. His artful prose from the period between 1359-1362 when he lived and travelled in the Maghrib provides an attentive and informed traveler's view of many aspects of life at home in al-Andalus and in the Maghrib. His education and skills reflected a flourishing intellectual culture in the western Muslim world that, despite its political upheavals, has been monumental in shaping the course of Moroccan, Mediterranean, even world intellectual history. His burial in Fez ensures that the connection between al-Andalus and the Maghrib endures.

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42    Al-Maqqari, *Nafh al-Tib*, 5: 111-12; Ibn al-Khatib, *Diwan*, ed. Muhammad Miftah (Casablanca: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1989), 1: 185.

43    Ibn al-Khatib, *Khatrat al-Tayf*, 111.

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# Going Home: al-Andalus and Exile in the Seventeenth Century

*Mary Hoyt Halavais*

On a spring day in 1609, King Philip III of Spain signed two important documents. One, a truce with the rebels Spain had been fighting in the Netherlands, was an unspoken admission that the Protestants, supported by England, had bested the Spanish. The other, a decree expelling all Spaniards of Muslim descent from the Spanish kingdoms, may have been intended to prove the king's loyalty to the Catholic Church and what were then called "old Christians," those whose families had been Catholic forever.[1] Expulsion, after all, was the method that Isabel of Castile had chosen to address non-Catholics, Jews; might it not also be a solution for the Muslims of Spain, even though all had been required to convert previously?

If Madrid saw the expulsion decree as a solution, other Spaniards saw it as a problem. Their formerly Muslim, or Morisco, neighbors were Spanish and were being exiled from their homes. To understand why the Spaniards included in the case studies below reacted as they did to the expulsion of the Moriscos, we must understand how those living in the Spanish realms thought of the place in which they lived, and how they thought of themselves in relation to it.

What, exactly, was "home" in the sixteenth-century world? In Spain, one's legal home was a very specific place. Most documents identified an individual as being from a particular town, and while these towns were part of kingdoms, they were also remarkably autonomous. A town was under a king or queen, and the rulers of both Castile and Aragon made a point of physically appearing at each individual locality, once they were crowned, to add their signatures to the town charter, affirming the right of that particular town to govern and police itself. Towns could even execute a criminal for a capital offense. Villages located in town lands all "belonged" to a particular town, though they might fight to become towns in their own right, with their own laws.[2]

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1  John Lynch, *The Hispanic World in Crisis and Change, 1598-1700* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 56.

2  Helen Nader, *Liberty in Absolutist Spain: The Hapsburg Sale of Towns, 1516-1700* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 17-43.

MAP 7    Al-Andalus and Morocco in the seventeenth century

However, this legal meaning of town as home was not immutable: one could, for example, ask to have one's name removed from the town register if one intended to relocate, although this was uncommon. In August 1614, Juan Castlejon of Báguena, a town in the Jiloca Valley, presented documents from Valencia's civil court, changing his citizenship to Valencia and requesting that they "purge the records and registers of the said place of Báguena in which his name is found recorded as a native son and a citizen of the said place."[3] Perhaps Castlejon was adopting Valencia as his home rather than abandoning Báguena. Take, for example, the case of Rodrigo de Altamirando, teacher in the town of Báguena in the 1590s. When he wrote his will, Altamirando expressed a desire to be buried "here in the place where I live."[4] This is particularly significant in a time when the sons of Báguena were returned from distant locations to their villages for burial. Home clearly included a lived attachment to a particular physical place.

Since the 1970s, both archaeologists and anthropologists have been interested in land, or land and its features, landscape, as an area of study. Land can "convey the specific traces of... material life as generations of diverse people have lived it."[5] Human social identity emerges from interaction with the landscape and each affects, shapes, and alters the other. One makes one's home, then, and is made by it as well, not only by the land itself, but also by the local environment (trees, hills, rivers) human construction (buildings, roads, ruins) and other individuals (one's neighbors). All of these factors together are "home." Home is the place and the people who are familiar, where one truly belongs. Jeff Oliver, writing about a different part of the world, comments, "[H]istory cannot be divorced from the landscape itself, from the active material and participative character of places, and their role in social and historical transformations."[6] Looking at the role of land and landscape this way has a number of advantages in the writing of history, but it also helps us to pay attention to the importance of place, and of one's own place, of home, in human thinking. Rather than considering the theoretical aspects of this approach, I prefer to consider a specific example: land and people in that part of sixteenth century Spain with which I am most familiar, southern Aragon.

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3  Archivo Municipal de Calamocha, Báguena, v. 84, 91-4. Hereafter Archivo Municipal is abbreviated A.M.

4  A.M. Calamocha, Báguena, v. 136, s.n.

5  Dolores Hayden, "Foreward," in *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, eds. Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), ix.

6  Jeff Oliver, *Landscapes and Social Transformations on the Northwest Coast* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 204.

In the area around Teruel and in the Jiloca Valley in the sixteenth century, almost everyone owned, or leased, farmland, even if their livelihood was not related to farming. Moreover, it was typical to own several small, varied, plots of land—some in the valley, some in the hills. That the people of southern Aragon were diversifying their portfolios is not the important point here. What is important is that working the land was almost a universal trait. Land ownership, or leasing, was a common project in residence or farming, whether in town or out in the surrounding land. Former Muslims and Jews and Christians made up a patchwork quilt in which they interacted with each other as well as with the land. In turn, the land bestowed an identity in which all participated. This was home; this was where they belonged in all senses of the word.[7]

This shared identity, whose ultimate source is the land, emerges quite clearly in places we might not expect to find it—in legal documents. While the King of Spain, in Madrid, might promulgate an order which established Spaniards of Muslim heritage as different, the lived experience of the people of Aragon is manifest in the statements made in response to this decree of expulsion. Spain was home to all who lived there, their actions and words argue, even if King Philip III did not agree. The case studies below provide an alternate picture of Spain, one based in the local and the physical—one might say, in the land itself.

1        **Case 1:  The Missing Morisco**

In October 1610, a few months after the expulsion of the Moriscos of Aragon, a stranger appeared in the little village of Gea. Moriscos had been told to gather together in designated towns, before being marched to the coast. Gea de Albarracin, a village in the south of Aragon with a significant Morisco population, was one of those towns. Escorted by a deputy, a group of Moriscos had departed from Gea on August 21, heading north. By the end of October, Miguel Izquierdo, an investigator from Valencia, had arrived in Gea. He was particularly interested in information about one Juan Herrero, Morisco, and we must therefore imagine that Herrero did not arrive at the ship with the rest. What could have happened to him? Perhaps he had never left Gea. Izquierdo had

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7   Mary Halavais, *Like Wheat to the Miller: Community, Convivencia and the Construction of Morisco Identity in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 2-12.

come up into the Serranía, the mountainous region where Gea was located, determined to get to the bottom of this mystery.[8]

With the Count of Fuentes, the local authority, present, this investigator interrogated several witnesses, and then filed his report for posterity. His summary of the case was as follows: the deputy had taken all of the *moros,* Moors, out of Gea and Albarracín, and all the other towns of the Serranía, on the twenty-first of August, and all of them had been ready to travel. Since Juan Herrero had been in Gea for a full eight days before the arrival of the deputy, he must have been among them. In fact, neither he nor the other Moriscos were able to leave the village; the deputy had threatened punishment for any who left. Moreover, everyone in town agreed that these were the facts of the case.[9]

This was how Izquierdo summarized the facts, but it's in the testimony he took from his three witnesses before he composed his summary that we begin to uncover the attitudes of the remaining citizens of the region—those who had not been sent packing by the crown—toward the exiles.

Francisco Palomar, 57, citizen of Montegredo, was interrogated first. Palomar, who lived in Gea, knew about the expulsion order. And yes, he knew the said Juan Herrero very well. Herrero had waved to him; he'd seen him and spoken to him, on the 17th, the 18th and the 19th. Yes, he had seen him and chatted with him, Palomar concluded, and that, he said, was the truth.[10]

Pedro Mondragon, 50, who lived in Gea, testified that he was well aware of the conditions of the expulsion; in fact, he had been there on the 21st of August, and had seen some of them leave in a loaded wagon, or open cart. Yes, he knew the Juan Herrero named in the paperwork very well; he had seen him in town on the 18th and 19th, and afterwards on the 21st he saw them out on the highway as they were leaving.[11]

Finally, 50-year-old Pedro Frayle, a nobleman, testified. Yes, he knew Herrero, because he, Frayle, had accompanied the deputy, whose name was Pedro de Sancet Martin. He'd gone all the way up the highway to the edge of Daroca with the exiles to heap provisions upon Sancet Martin so that the legal rights customary in Aragon would be provided to the Moors.[12] He knew Herrero very well. Herrero had been in Gea on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday

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8    Because of the distances involved, southern Aragon was overseen by Valencia, even though Valencia was a different kingdom within the Aragonese Crown. The Valencian Inquisition had charge of southern Aragon as well as Valencia from the early 16th century forward.

9    A.M. Cella, no. 74, Municipal Archives, Instituto de Estudios Turolenses, Teruel.

10   A.M. Cella, no. 74.

11   A.M. Cella, no. 74.

12   From Gea to Daroca is a journey of over 100 kilometers.

and on the day they all left, Herrero had come to Frayle's house to say goodbye because the two were friends and had professed friendship.[13]

What are we to make of this testimony? First of all, all three of these fifty-year-olds were pretty matter-of-fact about knowing Juan Herrero; they knew him *well*. We can imagine Herrero casually waving to Palomar from across the plaza, crossing over to chat with him. We can also imagine that Mondragon remembered that little open cart, overflowing with whatever the exiles could carry. Did Izquierdo notice the shift in Mondragon's testimony? Mondragon had seen Herrero in the days before the departure but he had also seen *them* leaving.

It's the testimony of the nobleman Pedro Frayle that's decisive. Frayle, who may have been more familiar with legal procedures than either Palomar or Mondragon, manages to make a couple of important points. First, Moriscos were entitled to the same rights as anyone else in Aragon. Frayle was willing to travel some distance and to provide what might have been provisions for the traveling Moriscos but were more likely bribes for the deputy to see that those rights were given to them. Secondly, he and Herrero were friends and since Herrero had been in Frayle's presence on the day of departure, he was surely in Gea, the place he was supposed to be. As a nobleman, Frayle had less to fear in being outspoken. Even so, all of the witnesses knew Herrero the Morisco well, talked with him, and were, in at least one case, bound to him with a bond of friendship, of *amistad.* Herrero was much more than simply a neighbor and, in the face of this testimony—this support for a friend for whom Gea was "home"—our investigator can do little more than repeat what the whole village agrees upon.

It is significant that the whole village agreed. A mere nine years after this incident, Lope de Vega's drama *Fuenteovejuna* saw its first performance, and although the play is based upon a historical event from the mid-1400s, its theme is very close to the events in Gea in 1610. In *Fuenteovejuna,* the local noble has attempted to take advantage of a village girl. The noble is murdered and when a justice appears demanding that the murderer be identified and handed over, the entire village stands steadfast, even under torture, each claiming that the town itself was the murderer, and that Fuenteovejuna had acted justly, if illegally. If, indeed, Juan Herrero had never actually left Gea, if he had managed to return home after leaving, wouldn't the testimony of his friends and neighbors in Gea be rather like that of the citizens of Fuentovejuna? Per-

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13      A.M. Cella, no. 74.

haps, with this kind of support, he remained in Gea, his home—or at least we can hope so.[14]

## 2    Case 2:  The Last Moriscas in Aragon

In our second case history, the Council of Aragon was deliberating over a letter from an Aragonese official who had asked the Crown what he should do. The official reported that he had been carrying out the King's 1614 order: Moriscos who had avoided expulsion, or had returned to Aragon post-expulsion, were to be located. All who were fit to row in the galleys were to be sent to do so; if they were women, or unfit to row, they were to be beaten and deprived of their belongings, and deported. If they returned after that, they were to be executed.

Officials were able to find only one returning Morisca, hidden away by other people in the city of Borja. She was now in prison in Saragossa.[15] There was one other Morisca being held there with her. The official wrote that "mindful of the fact that they were women, and that it was love of country that drew them," he had not ordered the execution of these two women.[16] And now he asked the Council, which made recommendations to the King, what the King's pleasure was, so that he could act upon it.

After deliberating, the Council advised the king that, after all, Aragon was the place which was the emptiest of these Moriscos, this race, *tan limpia de esta semilla* (so cleansed of this seed or race).[17] There couldn't possibly be more than these two Moriscas in it! For that reason, and because they were women, the council recommended that the only punishment be to expel them again, to throw them out of the kingdom.

This may not be an unusual case. But there is more here than the simple recommendation of exile. That this recommendation directly contradicts a royal order is enough to remark upon. But then these are women, not men, and Aragon is seen as a place in which the expulsion of the Moriscos had been carried out meticulously, or so the Council would have liked the king to believe. In fact, in much of the correspondence between Aragon and the metropolis, the same phrase *tan limpia de esta semilla* occurs again and again, whether early on, as a request and a recommendation, or later as a report of success. The

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14    Lope de Vega, *Fuenteovejuna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).
15    During the Taifa period, after the fall of Cordoba, the rulers of Saragossa had constructed a castle fortress. This building was used by the Inquisition as a prison in the sixteenth century.
16    Archivo de la Coruna de Aragon, Concejo 121, s.n.
17    A.C.A., Concejo 121, s.n.

phrase is even echoed in the mid-twentieth century by the French historian Henri Lapeyre and until recently this report was accepted as valid by historians.[18] But, as is often true in history, things are not quite that simple. Lapeyre worked with the ships' manifests and lists of passengers in counting the Moriscos expelled from the kingdom of Aragon, but not all of the Aragonese Moriscos were listed there. Some had successfully avoided being identified as Moriscos. Of those who had previously been identified as Moriscos, there were still 126 residing in the area around Saragossa alone; they had been granted license to remain. Some, to avoid being exiled from their home, had chosen imprisonment in the Inquisitorial prisons. In all, 226 Moriscos were condemned between 1610, the year of the expulsion, and 1620.[19] Some, as we have seen already, avoided expulsion with the help of their friends and neighbors. Was this known or suspected by the members of the Council of Aragon, or did they sincerely believe that there were no longer any descendants of Muslims living within Aragon? It's a question we are unable to answer.

It is worth noting that the council did not take up the official's comment about love of country in their recommendation to the king. What, exactly, did the official mean when he mentioned "love of country"? Beginning in the 1590s, certain phrases appeared and were repeated in the voluminous documentation generated by the Spanish Empire. One example of this was the phrase "good government." Good government might have been a concept before this time, but the phrase recurs again and again in the late 1500s and the early 1600s, an indication that, at least among the literate, a new pattern of thinking was emerging. We might account for this pattern in several ways. In the 1590s, King Philip II decided to reform the political relationship of Aragon to the Crown, removing some of the autonomy which had characterized Aragon, such as the *justicia,* or independent judiciary. These reforms clearly produced a reaction, especially among the Aragonese. It was also the beginning of the era of the *arbitristas,* Spain's early political economists, who analyzed governmental policy with the aim of improving it and correcting its flaws. The governing of Spain was beginning to be held to some ideal standards, standards which it was hard pressed to meet.

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18    Henri Lapeyre, *Géographie d'Espagne Morisque* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1959). Among recent historians who disagree see Trevor Dadson, *Los Moriscos de Villarubia de los Ojos* (*siglos XV-XVIII*) (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2007) and James B. Tueller, *Good and Faithful Christians: Moriscos and Catholicism in Early Modern Spain* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2002).

19    Ricardo Garcia Carcel, "The Course of Moriscos up to their Expulsion," in *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind,* ed. Angel Alcalá (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 1987), 83.

But "good government" is not the only phrase to make an appearance during this time. The phrase "love of country," while it occurs less often, also began to appear and, of course, it referred to one's own land, not to the government that controlled it. These two exiled Moriscas who were motivated by "love of country," the officials seem to be saying, were not making a political statement; they were simply longing to come back to their own land. In fact, the administrator's remark echoes the comment Pedro Frayle made in our previous case. Both the administrator and Frayle regarded Aragon as home for the Moriscos who were being sent away from it.

The women's love of country had a benefit as it saved them from execution. We should, however, remember that in ancient Greece, where home was important enough to spend all of ten years returning to it, exile was a fate worse than death. What could be worse than to be sent away from a beloved country, from home?

## 3 Case 3: Moriscos "In Much Peace and Repose"

In 1621, Philip IV became king of Spain. The war with the Netherlands, halted by a truce which began on the very day that Philip III signed the decree mandating the expulsion of the Moriscos, had resumed. Piracy was a serious problem in the Mediterranean, particularly since the Spanish fleet had not been maintained properly, and widespread inflation, the product of American silver, was making life in Spain uncomfortable for the wealthy and impossible for the poor. In this environment, we should not be surprised that the Spanish Crown sought new sources of income.

In 1626, Pedro Alos, a royal agent, reported to the king that a "great many" Moriscos still lived in Aragon. Some had been expelled and returned, "fleeing from Barbary and other places," while others had never left in the first place. All of them, Alos reported, "live here with their wives, families and belongings in much peace and repose, and without anyone aiming to stop them." This was the case, he suspected, because "certain individuals" protected and defended them.[20]

Alos suggested that the Crown ought to consider these Moriscos as a revenue source. "These households can be valued at more than two hundred thousand ducats," he reported, "most of which is ready cash and could be of service to His Majesty for provisioning the remaining Royal Navy." He suggested, in addition, that the Moriscos, once deprived of their assets, might well serve as

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20    A.C.A., Concejo 121 s.n.

rowers to "reinforce the galleys." He concluded with some satisfaction that this would put a halt to the encouragement the Moriscos received from the Aragonese "natives" who, for their own reasons, defended the Moriscos and hid them.[21]

It is strange that Alos considered the old Christian residents of Aragon to be natives, that is, those who had been born there, but was unwilling to use this term for the Moriscos, most of whom were also clearly native-born Aragonese. There had been Muslims resident in the Iberian Peninsula, after all, for almost nine hundred years. In the sixteenth century, however, the Spanish Inquisition, which oversaw the "Christianity" of forcibly converted Muslims, had pictured them in its internal correspondence as essentially foreign.[22] The Spanish Crown, which had entered into the war with the Netherlands in part because it considered the Low Countries insufficiently Catholic, seems to have seen religious heresy as equivalent to political disloyalty, and so would have been receptive to this argument.[23] The threat of possible Morisco collusion with the Muslim Ottoman Empire would have given this characterization even more power as Pedro Alos undoubtedly realized. He continued:

> So it is a definite necessity to finish getting rid of this race of people, because if we don't do it completely, serious inconveniences will follow, the most serious of which is related to the relationship they have with the Moors of Barbary, from whom they originate, whose ships and galleys sail all along our coastline quite safely, carrying within them aid and provisions, without being checked and with much damage to His Majesty's subjects, damage which, even worse, we fear will be irreparable if there is no prompt remedy.[24]

This image of enemies conspiring against Spain, of the essential foreignness of the Morisco population, had, in the end, been a justification for the expulsion. Why not draw upon it now, some sixteen years later?

Alos concluded with a method for implementing his plan, one which required both secrecy and speed, since he feared both that the Moriscos might try to hide their assets and that his own life might be in danger. So, he said, the Council of Aragon was "ordered to name an agent and other ministers, for the good direction of this business and to the benefit of the King's interests." These

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21    A.C.A., Concejo 121, s.n.
22    Halavais, *Like Wheat to the Miller*, 126-134.
23    Peter Pearson, *Philip II of Spain* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975). Pearson writes that Philip II consistently referred to the Dutch and "heretics and rebels."
24    A.C.A., Concejo 121, s.n.

ministers would, he assured the Council, be given "all that is necessary to carry out the work."[25]

The Council, however, had other ideas. They began by pointing out that they had no idea what Alos was talking about. They didn't really believe that there were any Moriscos left in Aragon. In this, of course, if the Council was being a bit devious, at least they were being consistent; this is what they had argued in our earlier case ten years earlier. They added that if indeed there were wealthy Morisco households somewhere hidden away, they had failed to come to the notice of the Viceroys in Aragon, the king's appointees, who certainly had said nothing about it. Then the Council noted that the last time he had audited his diocese, the Archbishop of Valencia had discovered more than one thousand Moriscos living there. He had contacted the Viceroy of Aragon about this. The Archbishop needed to know what to do, because some of these Moriscos had asked to be married, and he wasn't quite sure whether to go ahead, because "he had begun to have serious spiritual doubts."[26]

The Council continued that they, of course, were under the impression that the Viceroy had contacted the king about this, as they put it, " so that [the king] might be served, and from whom he [the Viceroy] might receive an order." They pointed out to Alos that no one would want to act on a matter like this without having an order from His Majesty. The Council of Aragon concluded, "because all of the regulations which touch upon this matter come from the Council of State, His Majesty will rule, and his order will be obeyed."[27] By invoking Spain's bureaucracy, the Council was able to avoid the issue twice: first, by reminding Alos that the recommendation would have to come from the Council of State, rather than from the Council of Aragon and, second, by stating that without a direct order from the king, Aragon could not act.

In fact, the Council's entire response was politically impressive. First, the Council denied any knowledge of the presence of Moriscos in Aragon. Then, they pointed out that if, indeed, there were any Moriscos in the various kingdoms of the Crown of Aragon, the viceroys, the representatives of the king in each of these kingdoms, would surely have notified the Council previously. These viceroys certainly would have better knowledge of their own kingdoms than some investigator from Madrid! The Council would have heard, they reminded Alos, if the viceroys had known anything about this.

Then the Council brought in the Church in the person of the Archbishop of Valencia. They were aware that the Archbishop had contacted the Viceroy of

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25    A.C.A., Concejo 121, s.n.
26    A.C.A., Concejo 121, s.n.
27    A.C.A., Concejo 121, s.n.

the Crown of Aragon about his concerns since the Moriscos of the Kingdom of Valencia seem to have been practicing Christians and had been asking him for permission to marry. The expression of the "spiritual doubts" of the Archbishop mentioned here was a particularly deft touch. At the time of the expulsion, the then-Archbishop of Valencia, Juan de Ribera, who had been part of the effort to convert the Moriscos of Valencia to Christianity, had publicly despaired of his ability to ever do so. It was, he had argued, clearly an impossible task.[28] Ribera had died in 1611, but it is entirely believable that a subsequent archbishop might have been subject to the same sorts of "spiritual doubts" that had tormented Ribera.

On the other hand, the Moriscos of Valencia, from the little that the Council of Aragon said in this reply, did not seem to be rejecting Christianity. After all, they were coming to the Archbishop to ask for permission to be married in the Church. The Council must have been aware that Madrid had been willing to exempt Moriscos who were faithful Christians from the expulsion order, even post-expulsion. So, when the Council said that they presumed that the Vice-Chancellor, upon hearing from the Archbishop, would have contacted the King, this would not necessarily have resulted in action against those practicing Christians. The Council concluded by pointing out to Alos that any order on this matter would not come from him, but from the King and the Council of State. Thus, "His Majesty"—and not you, Alos—"will rule."[29]

It's now clear that the Council was primarily protecting itself in this response to Pedro Alos. He might have wanted to go off on his own, discovering wealthy Moriscos and depriving them of their freedom and property, but the Council was not going to assist him. At the same time, given the Council's willingness in our previous case to subvert the king's order, exempting two Moriscas from execution, we begin to see a pattern in the Council's actions. From a distance of almost four hundred years, it is reassuring to imagine those Aragonese Moriscos, safely at home, "living with their wives, families and belongings in much peace and repose," and, if Alos was correct, in some comfort.[30] In all likelihood, just as Alos reported, they were supported and protected by their old Christian neighbors and not at all interested in collusion with the Turk. The Council of Aragon would not permit these Aragonese residents, if indeed they were there, to be disturbed by Alos, or by anyone. Far from being defensive about the continued presence of Moriscos, they used their reply on this matter

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28    Benjamin Ehler, *Between Christians and Moriscos: Juan de Ribera and Religious Reform in Valencia, 1568-1614* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 103-105.

29    A.C.A., Concejo 121, s.n.

30    A.C.A., Concejo 121, s.n.

as a way of expressing their vision of Aragon as a place they knew best, a home to all who continued to live there.

On the Iberian Peninsula, every town or village had its own particular saint. Some places were named for their saints, but whether or not they were, a saint was charged with protecting the place and those who belonged to it. But "home" had a meaning that went beyond this merely spiritual dimension. Home was the sum of a lifetime, or lifetimes, of lived experiences. It was the place, as Altamirando wrote, where you made your life, and where your life was made—by the land itself, always there, written and rewritten on like a palimpsest, by the structures, some of which would remain, and some of which would not, and by the people.[31] One's town, and the land associated with it, with all of its entrances and exits, as the documents of the time put it, was the place which you might leave to work in the fields, or to watch the sheep, or to go to market, or to fight a king's war, or for another reason, but it was always the place to which you would return. In the end, after death, your body would return, and as it traveled familiar streets for the last time, ordinary people would join in and walk behind it, because you had been one of them.[32] These people of Spain recognized one place as home, whether you were present or absent.

We ought, then, to consider those "absent" neighbors, those who had not returned home. Thus far, we have been considering Moriscos who attempted, some successfully and some unsuccessfully, to return home or to stay there. But there were also some Moriscos who, deliberately remaining in exile, continued to think of themselves as belonging to the land and a people they had left. We find some of these exiles in our next case.

## 4      Case 4:  The Pirates of Bou Regreg

The Republic of Bou Regreg, named for the river which flows between present-day Rabat and Salé, was founded by Moriscos expelled from Spain between 1609 and 1614 who never considered themselves part of the country where they settled. The Moriscos who arrived in 1609 had petitioned the town of Salé to

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31      Jennifer Lucido, *The Old Stand: A Historical Resource Study of the Royal Presidio of Monterey, 1770-1840* (M.A. in Cultural Resources Management, Sonoma State University, 2015). On buildings, see Miles Orvell, "Ruins," in *Rethinking the American City: An International Dialogue,* eds. Miles Orvell and Klaus Benesch (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 71-92.

32      This practice continues and sometimes a visitor may join in as I did in early 1995 in Calamocha, Aragon.

accept them, but Salé rejected them as being too foreign.[33] These exiles settled, then, on the opposite bank of the river, in the fortress or *ribāṭ* which had been abandoned after the reign of Yacoub el-Mansour, Almohad ruler from 1184-1199.[34] The location was an ideal spot for pirates, as any visitor to the casbah in Rabat can see today; it secures the high ground and provides a clear view of the surrounding land, of the mouth of the river, and of the Atlantic. The Moriscos, who evidently had some capital, immediately armed some vessels for privateering. A year later, in 1610, more Morisco exiles arrived, this time from Andalusia, the south of Spain. They settled together in a new neighborhood below the fortress. At first on good terms with the local authority, Muley Zidan, the Moriscos became more independent by the late 1620s, eventually forming a self-governing community, the Republic of Bou Regreg, which was ruled by an elected governor, who held office for a year, with the assistance of a *diwan*, council, of seven and two qadis, judges, both from Spain.[35]

The move to structure a form of local government might have more significance than the merely political. The towns of the Crown of Aragon had strong municipal governments and a tradition of autonomy; they enforced their own law codes, or *fueros,* within the towns' *terminos,* or surrounding land. In Castile, many towns had purchased their independence from the crown, and so were self-governing as well.[36] In the absence of the familiar, of decades or more of life lived in a place where the land and the people were a long-standing part of one's life, perhaps a traditional political form might help to replace them. We might look to another such example: the formation of "republics" among the Spanish troops fighting in the Netherlands. These soldiers, temporary exiles from home in an ongoing war, had not been paid in many months. Moreover, because they were no longer at home, where an appeal to the crown would have been made through one's home town, they had no way to remedy their situation. In the absence of home, they constructed a familiar political form. They became independent republics, complete with their own flags and official seals. As autonomous political entities, these republics could address the King of Spain directly.[37]

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33    Salé was known for the piety of its residents and its reverence toward the local marabout, or religious leaders.

34    Charles-André Julien, *History of North Africa* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970),118.

35    Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 218; Leila Maziane, *Salé et ses Corsaires* (Rouen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2007), 90-93; Ellen G. Friedman, *Spanish Captives in North Africa in the Early Modern Age* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 26-27.

36    Nader, *Liberty in Absolutist Spain,* 71-99.

37    Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road,* 1567-1659 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 157-177

The Republic of Bou Regreg, however, emerged from a position of financial and political strength. These privateers were excellent pirates and traders, willing to work with other privateers. By the mid-1630s, they had 40 to 50 vessels and a merchant community that dealt in corsair booty grew up in the region. Physically, the mouth of the river was ideal for corsair activity; a sand bar closed it off to large vessels and provided a sheltered harbor. The resources and skills of the privateers were augmented by those of English and Dutch corsairs who, having been banned from English ports upon the accession of James I of England, had settled in Marmora on the Moroccan coast. The Spanish took Marmora in 1614 and English and Dutch privateers, displaced again, joined the Bou Regreg community. By 1624, the Bou Regreg fleet had a Dutch captain and was capable of inflicting substantial damage upon Spanish shipping.[38]

Had Bou Regreg become a new multi-national home for the Moriscos exiled by the king of Spain? There is evidence to the contrary. The Republic of Bou Regreg, like the soldiers' republics of the Army of Flanders, petitioned the King directly on at least two occasions. In 1631, Morisco residents of the casbah proposed a treaty to King Philip IV of Spain. According to the terms of this treaty, if the Moriscos were permitted to return to their homes in Spain as members in good standing of the Church and if they were reunited with those children they had lost at the time of the expulsion, they were willing to give the casbah, with its artillery and merchandise, to the king and to sail to Spain in their own ships which they would surrender to the king for Spain's navy.[39] Two years later in 1633, the English ambassador to Madrid was reporting that the treaty had been concluded and that all that remained was for the pope to give his consent in order for the Moriscos to return home.[40] The agreement, however, was never finalized.

In 1637, the Moriscos from Andalusia residing in Rabat below the casbah, still hoping to return home to their own land and their own people, were able to reach an agreement with Don Juan de Toledo of the Spanish fortress at Marmora on the Atlantic coast to the north of Salé. But Don Juan's return to Marmora from Spain was delayed by bad weather and, in the end, nothing came of this agreement either.[41] The Spanish governor of Mazagan reported in 1619 to the king of Spain that he had met a Morisco from Bou Regreg who came to the presidio on a ship sent by Muley Zidan. When he asked this Morisco about Spain, it brought tears to the man's eyes. He told the governor that he still want-

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38    Friedman, *Spanish Captives*, 27.
39    Jerome Bookin-Weiner, "Corsairing in the economy and politics of North Africa," in *North Africa: Nation, State and Region*, ed. E.G.H. Joffé (New York: Routledge, 1993), 15.
40    Bookin-Weiner, "Corsairing," 15.
41    Bookin-Weiner, "Corsairing," 18.

ed to die in Spain. From the history of the Republic of Bou Regreg, it is not likely that this individual was granted his wish.

Bou Regreg had been nominally under the protection of the local marabout, or religious leader, al-Ayyashi. When he died in 1641, the region passed to the marabouts of Dila. Muley al-Rashid took control of Bou Regreg almost thirty years later. He found and was able to tax the profits of a highly organized system of piracy.

In Fez, Muslims who left the Iberian peninsula for North Africa were able to make a new home, the Andalusian quarter, centuries before the exile of Spain's Morisco population. The Bou Regreg pirates, forced from their homeland, were not so flexible nor so fortunate. The group continued to hold themselves apart from native Moroccans. They continued to raid ships, including those which flew the flag of Spain. At the same time, they longed to return to the familiar, to their people and their homes. Their lived experience of home, of it fields and trees and songs and dust, had disappeared.

For Juan Herrero, home was Gea, where he was known, where he could wave to an acquaintance. For our Aragonese Moriscos living "in much peace and repose," home was also a specific place. For the Moriscas exiled from Aragon and for the pirates of Bou Regreg, though, home was different. As with exiles in all times and places, home was now a possibility, made up of historical memory and hope for the future.

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# The Land of Syria in the Late Seventeenth Century: 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi and Linking City and Countryside through Study, Travel, and Worship

*Steve Tamari*

We live at a time when it is hard to conceive of the modern Syria republic as a country, much less "geographical Syria," the focus of this chapter. Bilad al-Sham, as geographical or greater Syria is known in Arabic, now encompasses the independent states of Lebanon, Jordan, Israel/Palestine as well as Syria itself. As of this writing (spring 2018), Syria the nation state is divided among at least three major state and proto-state entities: the Ba'thist state, Islamists and more secular rebels, and an autonomous Kurdish region. With the number of dead in the five-year civil war approaching a half million, is it not preposterous to suggest the people of this country ever had anything in common? Over the last decade, scholars and pundits have been increasingly comfortable declaring that the states of the region, particularly Syria and Iraq, have always been artificial creations, their borders and their national identities concocted and imposed by British and French colonial officials and the rapacious military dictators who succeeded them.[1]

In the face of the naysaying about the integrity and unity of this land, this chapter makes the case for geographical Syria as being a discrete and cohesive territory with definable borders to which its people both urban and rural have been strongly attached since ancient times, with a specific focus on the late seventeenth century. Civil strife among the people of this land is not new. In the Ottoman period alone, geographical Syria was wracked by wars pitting local potentates against regional centers of power as in the conflicts between governors of the province of Damascus and the war lords of the Hauran and the emirs of the Galilee and of Acre and their hinterlands; the perennial

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1 Proponents of the view that Middle Eastern countries in general and geographical Syria in particular are artificial creations run the gamut from anti-imperialists like Avi Shlaim, author of *War and Peace in the Middle East* (London: Penguin Books, 1995) to the Westernizers like Daniel Pipes, author of *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1992). For a more recent (2013) and explicit expression of this idea from the punditocracy, see Andrew Sullivan, "Syria is not a Country," *The Dish*, <http://dish.andrewsullivan.com/2013/09/12/syria-is-not-a-country/> (accessed August 13, 2018).

MAP 8        Bilad al-Sham in the seventeenth century

struggle between urbanites and the nomadic pastoralists who controlled the routes (thus, trade, communication, and pilgrimage) between the cities; and the sectarian violence in Mt. Lebanon and Damascus in the 1860s. But, even in periods of strife, consciousness of Bilad al-Sham as a singular territory imbued with spiritual, emotional, and aesthetic significance—not to mention the bounty of the land—has been persistent throughout the centuries.

The term "Syria" was first used by Greek writers in the seventh century BCE to describe what is known today as "geographical Syria," a region which stretches north to south from the foothills of the Taurus Mountains in Anatolia to the Sinai Peninsula and the edges of the Arabian Desert, and west to east from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River.[2] Around the time of the historian Herodotus (fifth century BCE), Greeks began to use "Syria" for geographical Syria and "Assyria" for Mesopotamia even though the people of those lands used both terms interchangeably at least through the early Christian era.[3] After the Greeks, "Syria" was picked up by the Romans who were the first to use it to name an administrative province. The term made its way into the geographical lexicon of the Eastern Roman Empire, the Christian Byzantine Empire. "Syria" was still in use during the first century of Arab Muslim rule.

Syria, as a place (if not the term) remained to play a role in Islamic history, this time under the name "al-Sham" until the eleventh century CE. For most of the "middle period" (950-1500) of decentralization in the Muslim world, it then came under the name "al-Sham" and later "Bilad al-Sham" (country of al-Sham), and was more often than not divided or attached to neighboring regions and subject to the whims of competing rulers. The term "al-Sham" comes from the Arabic root *sh-ʾ-m* which denotes to the north or to the left. Facing east from the vantage point of the Hijaz, the western edge of the Arabian Peninsula and the birthplace of Islam, al-Sham is to the left or north while Yemen lies to the right side, or the south, *al-yaman*. Muslim and Arab geographers delimited "al-Sham" in the same general way as had their pre-Islamic predecessors. In his *Ahsan al-Taqsim fi Maʿrifat al-Aqalim* (Best of divisions for knowledge of the regions), the tenth-century geographer Muhammad al-Muqaddasi defined the boundaries of al-Sham as extending from Egypt to Bilad al-Rum (Anatolia) and from the Mediterranean (Bahr al-Rum) to the Desert of the

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2   Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, "The Name of Syria in Ancient and Modern Usage," *Al-Qantara: Revista de Estudios Arabes* 15, no. 2 (1994): 285-296.

3   Richard Frye, "Assyria and Syria: Synonyms," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 51, no. 4 (Oct. 1992): 281-285. For more on the ancient origins of "Syria" and "Assyria" see Robert Rollinger, "The Terms "Assyria" and "Syria" Again," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 65, no. 4 (October 2006): 283-287.

Arabs including al-Jazira, the Upper Euphrates region.[4] Within these boundaries, he included the cities and towns of Aleppo (Halab), Homs, Damascus, Tiberius, Ramla, Nablus, Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis), Jaffa, Maʿn, Amman, Baalbek, Sayda, Beirut, and Tripoli.[5] The thirteenth-century geographer Yaqut al-Rumi al-Hamawi (d. 1229) wrote in his *Muʿjam al-Buldan* (Dictionary of the lands) that al-Sham runs from al-ʿArish in Egypt and from al-Tih (the Sinai) to the Mediterranean. He included within his discussion the cities of Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Damascus, Jerusalem, Maʿn, Antioch, Tartus, Acre, Tyre (Sur), and ʿAsqalan.[6] In the fourteenth century, Abu al-Fida Ismaʿil (d. 1331) in *Kitab Taqwim al-Buldan* (Book of survey of the lands) says al-Sham stretches from the Mediterranean to Bilad al-Arman (Armenia) and from Rafah to Tih to Shawbak (in southern Jordan) to the Balqa region (encompassing the towns of Amman and Salt).[7]

In addition to being a distinct territory, al-Sham was symbolically critical to how Muslim writers and rulers defined themselves in relation to the wider world. From a foreign and distant land in the early history of Islam to one almost on a par with the Hijaz as a sacred land in the early modern period, the ebb and flow of al-Sham's significance was dizzying. In his reading of classical Arabic literature, Peter Webb argues that al-Sham was central to the consciousness of Arab Muslim writers of the ninth and tenth centuries. From ninth-century collections of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and the earliest biography of the Prophet Muhammad to al-Tabari's (d. 923) monumental *Taʾrikh al-Rusul wa-l-Muluk* (History of the prophets and kings), al-Sham was depicted as remote, foreign, distinctly non-Arab, and a foil to "Islam's rise as an Arabian phenomenon, hermetically sealing nascent Arab-Islam from the wider Near East."[8] During the period of contraction marked by the Crusades, the symbolic fortunes of al-Sham took a dramatic turn as rulers and writers began to fashion it anew as a holy land. Jerusalem had held a special place in Muslim sensibilities as the departure point for the Prophet Muhammad's miraculous visit to heaven. But there came to be more to its allure than that. Tombs and sites associated with Jewish prophets, with John, Mary and Jesus, with companions of the

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4   Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Muqaddasi, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions*: *Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Maʿrifat al-Aqalim*, Basil Anthony Collins, trans. (Reading, UK: Center for Muslim Contribution to Civilization, 1994), 59.

5   Muqaddasi, *The Best Divisions,* 132.

6   Yaqut b. ʿAbdallah al-Hamawi, *Muʿjam al-Buldan* (Beirut: Dar al-Sadr and Dar Bayrut, 1957), 3: 312.

7   Abu al-Fidaʾ Ismaʿil b. ʿAli, *Kitab Taqwim al-Buldan*, eds. Joseph Reinaud and William MacGuckin (Paris, La Société Asiatique, 1840), 225.

8   Peter Webb, "Pre-Islamic al-Shām in Classical Arabic Literature," *Studia Islamica* 110, no. 2 (2015): 163.

Prophet, and with ascetics and Sufi saints began to be sites of pilgrimage, of visitation, and of renovation and construction by military and secular leaders. Changing political fortunes and the savvy use of monuments as propaganda shaped the religious landscape of al-Sham.[9] Two critical periods in this process occurred. The first took place during the Crusades when the singular importance of Jerusalem in previous periods was matched by a growing attention to al-Sham as a whole as the land of prophesy. Then came the Mamluk period when al-Zahir Baybars (d. 1277) established a host of monuments and refurbished the tombs of saints and historic Muslim leaders to create what one historian calls an "Islamic Holy Land".[10] There were alternating periods when Jewish, Christian, and pre-Islamic Arab prophets were celebrated and periods when the emphasis was on more properly Muslim figures.

Out of these processes developed, first, the *faḍāʾil* al-Sham literature, extolling the virtues of this land particularly as the resting place of so many prophets and saints and, later, *kutub ziyāra*, or pilgrimage guides, directing and explaining the significance of the growing number of sites that a pilgrim could visit in al-Sham.[11] Zayde Antrim has traced the process whereby Syrian geographers and historians progressively developed the sense that a once relatively vague notion of al-Sham as demarcated by boundaries and the urban centers within them gradually acquired distinct meaning and significance as a sacred land unto itself. In the language of scholars of space and geography, this "space" acquired more and more of the attributes of a "place." In Antrim's terms, a "discourse of place" took shape beginning with Ibn Asakir's (d. 1176) topographical introduction to his *Taʾrikh Madinat Dimashq* (History of the city of Damascus) in which he deliberately "saw a particular need to address Syria as a region and to uphold it as a coherent and cohesive territory, united in a single identity and destiny."[12] A century later, Ibn Shaddad (d. 1285) did much the same from the vantage point of Aleppo and as such represented the region of Syria as anchored by its two metropoles, Damascus and Aleppo, and through descriptions of its minor towns and rural areas. Writes Antrim, "Ibn Shaddad produced what may be the first fully integrated historical topography of Syria—in other

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9     Paul Cobb, "Virtual Sacrality: Making Muslim Syria Sacred before the Crusades," *Medieval Encounters* 8 no. 1 (2001): 35-55.

10    Y. Frenkel, "Baybars and the Sacred Geography of Bilad al-Sham: A Chapter in the Islamization of Syria's Landscape," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2002): 153-170.

11    Josef W. Meri, "A Late Medieval Syrian pilgrimage guide: Ibn Al-Awrānī's Al-Ishārāt Ilā Amākin Al-Ziyārāt (Guide to Pilgrimage Places) *Medieval Encounters* 7 (2001): 3-78; Josef W. Meri, "Ziyara," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 11: 524-529.

12    Zayde Antrim, "Ibn Asakir's Representations of Syria and Damascus in the Introduction to the *Taʾrikh Madinat Dimashq*," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, no. 1 (2006): 112.

words, the first detailed physical description of Syria blended with a political and institutional history."[13]

Despite this geographical and cultural unity, al-Sham was often politically divided. Under the Abbasids, beginning in the middle of the eighth century, Iraq became the center of the Muslim world and al-Sham was left to the whims of competing minor potentates, including Turkish Seljuq emirs and Frankish Crusaders. The short-lived Zangid state (of the middle decades of the twelfth century) represented one of the few times of political unity within Bilad al-Sham. Under the succeeding Ayyubid and Mamluk regimes, Syria was united with Egypt and ruled from Cairo, and after 1516 it was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire based in Istanbul. Even under relatively centralized Mamluk and Ottoman rule, administrative practice meant that Bilad al-Sham was repeatedly divided into different units. For most of the Mamluk period, it was divided into six administrative units, those of Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Tripoli, Safad, and Karak. Under the Ottomans there were initially two units, Damascus and Aleppo, with Tripoli added soon after as a coastal province. Sidon was added near the end of the seventeenth century as the Ottoman central authorities recognized in name the reality of autonomy in Mt. Lebanon, a process which culminated in a special administrative status for the area in the 19th century through European intervention.

The administrative mosaic described above and the fact that Bilad al-Sham was never politically unified has convinced many scholars and observers that it lacked the territorial integrity of a bona fide country or land like, for example, the river valleys of Egypt or Iraq. Modernist assumptions about pre-modern Muslim societies ignore the importance of territorial consciousness and attachment to lands such as al-Sham in favor of stressing local, sectarian, and communal loyalties. Such are the basic assumptions behind the work of modernist scholars of Ottoman Syria. Thomas Philipp builds on the "localist" trend among historians of the cities of Bilad al-Sham, such as Damascus, Aleppo, Jerusalem, Nablus, Hama, Homs and Acre, published during the last twenty years or so.[14] He argues that, instead of existing in any significant way during the first three centuries of Ottoman rule, Bilad al-Sham is better understood in terms of more "locally integrated regions" such as Jabal Khalil, Jabal Nablus, Acre and its hinterland, Jabal ʿAmil, Mt. Lebanon, Jabal al-Druz and Aleppo and Damascus and their respective hinterlands. It is not until the aftermath of the Egyptian

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13    Zayde Antrim, "Making Syria Mamluk: Ibn Shaddad's *al-Aʿlaq al-Khatirah*," *Mamluk Studies* 11, no. 1 (2007): 12.

14    Thomas Philipp, "Identities and Loyalties in Bilad al-Sham at the Beginning of the Early Modern Period," in *From the Syrian Lands to the States of Syria and Lebanon,* eds. Thomas Philipp and Christoph Schumann (Beirut: Orient Institut, 2004), 9-26.

invasion of 1831, according to Philipp, that the idea of Bilad al-Sham as a single territory appears. He says this is only possible because the Egyptian invasion and occupation challenged Ottoman legitimacy in the minds of Syrians for the first time. In addition, the idea of Greater Syria was revived by the local use of the ancient Greek term "Syria" for the first time—this as a direct result of European influence. Philipp concludes, "The new designation of the region by its name in antiquity, "Syria", also came to be symbol and program for a society deliberately and self-consciously entering the modern era."[15] Fruma Zachs provides another sustained discussion in English of Syrian identity in the Ottoman period and concludes that it was a modern phenomenon produced by a minority of Christian Arab elites with close ties to the West.[16]

The evidence from medieval Arab and Muslim geography and from writers of the first three centuries of the Ottoman period suggests that there was a far deeper appreciation of territorial cohesion among the inhabitants of the region than the modernist paradigm suggests. Despite administrative fragmentation and lack of unity, Syria in the guise of Bilad al-Sham remained a significant part of the historical, spiritual, and territorial identity of its inhabitants, urbanites and rural dwellers, and Muslims and Christians alike.

This study explores the profound connections between city and countryside and between constituent parts of Bilad al-Sham, such as Palestine and Lebanon, during the seventeenth century. Our window onto the web of a shared spiritual and historical consciousness as well as the monuments and practices that make it tangible is the writing of ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, most notably his travelogues. In regard to appreciating the unity of the land, al-Nabulusi was not alone as his medieval predecessors mentioned above testify. But he took travelling and writing about this land to new heights during the last decades of the seventeenth century.

Al-Nabulusi was—despite his name—a member of a prominent family of scholars who have lived in Damascus for many generations. Al-Nabulusi lived a long, productive life. He began his writing career at age 25 with a poem and a commentary which together established his reputation as a master of the Arabic language and of its aesthetic and analytical tools.[17] He was one of—if not *the*—most prominent Arabic-writing and Muslim intellectual of his era. Not only was he a member of the scholarly elite, he was immensely popular among non-elites, *al-ʿāmm*. He was elevated to the post of chief mufti of Damascus by

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15    Philipp, "Identities and Loyalties," 26.

16    Fruma Zachs, *The Making of Syrian Identity: Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

17    Samer Akkach, *ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi: Islam and the Enlightenment* (Oxford, UK: One World, 2007), 27.

popular acclaim (even though he lost the post quickly due to power politics) and when at home in Damascus or on the road, he drew crowds to his public lectures and was celebrated by those who knew him or knew of him. One measure of his popularity among the middling classes is that at least one chronicler of Damascus, Muhammad Ibn Kannan, faithfully mentioned al-Nabulusi's annual inaugural and final lectures along with other events that affected the whole populace like the departure and arrival of the hajj caravan.[18]

During the latter part of the seventeenth century, al-Nabulusi was caught up in a kind of "culture war" which pitted an austere brand of Sunni orthodoxy against the Sufism and popular religious and secular activities of the populace at large. The Kadizadeli movement, as the reform-minded reaction to Sufism become known, originated among mid-level imams in Istanbul and quickly spread around the empire and into centers of education like Damascus.[19] Al-Nabulusi spent much of 1670s fending off these critics of Sufism and of the ideas of Ibn 'Arabi with a series of treatises in defense of popular practices like tomb visitation, listening to music, drinking coffee, and smoking tobacco. At the same time, he composed more introspective works on the hidden sources of truth which served to challenge those who claimed to have a monopoly on morality and proper Muslim behavior.[20] One such book was *Anwar al-Suluk fi Asrar al-Muluk* (Illuminating proper conduct as regards the secrets of kings) in which the author boldly admonishes those who are bent on condemning any behaviors or practices which they consider *bida'*, or unacceptable innovations, and who forget that much of what Muslims take for granted were themselves innovations in their time. As a result of exhaustion and attacks on his person, he retreated in 1680 into his home near the Umayyad Mosque to begin a seven-year period of voluntary isolation. He was not, however, idle and continued his prodigious literary output. By the time he came back out into the world, the fervor of the Kadizadelis had died down and, as demonstrated below, he was consumed by a hunger to see, touch, feel, smell, and taste the world around him through the spiritual benefits of pilgrimage to sacred sites and holy lands.

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18 Muhammad Ibn Kannan, *Yawmiyat Shamiyya*, ed. Akram Hasan al-'Ulabi (Damascus: Dar al-Tabba', 1994), 87, 143, 219, 327, 365, 371, 381.

19 Madeline C. Zilfi, "The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45, no. 4 (Oct. 1986): 251-269. For the influence of the Kadizadelis on Damascus and al-Nabulusi in particular, see Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary of Damascus: 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, 1641-1731* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 15, 48, 82, 128.

20 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, *Anwar al-Suluk fi Asrar al-Muluk*, Staatsbibliotek zu Berlin Lbg. 1016, 6b-8b.

Over the next 65 years—he died at age 90—he composed around 300 titles.[21] His courses at al-Salimiyya, the mosque complex in al-Salihiyya, a northern suburb of Damascus and the site of Ibn 'Arabi's tomb, in the Umayyad Mosque, and at other *madāris,* colleges, were always packed.

Scholars interested in al-Nabulusi's intellectual output have always recognized the variety of his modes of literary expression—from the poetic to the polemical—and the broad range of fields of learning he engaged in. However, until recently most studies have focused on his work as a defender of Sufism in general and of Ibn 'Arabi's thought more specifically.[22] In the small body of modern scholarship devoted to al-Nabulusi's travelogues, the primary source for this chapter, the Sufi character and spiritual goals of his journeys have been stressed. Elizabeth Sirriyeh, one of his biographers, emphasizes the "interiority" of his observations and considers his travel accounts "mystical *riḥla*s".[23] Indeed, al-Nabulusi states himself that his journeys were inspired by a "desire to immerse [himself] visiting the pious ones—living and dead—and to be blessed by the gift of their presence and to conclude with the hajj itself."[24] The impulse which turns the hajj into a pilgrimage of pilgrimages runs throughout his travelogues. He visits hundreds of tombs and shrines dedicated to prophets and sacred figures from Adam and Cain and Abel to the Jewish prophets (*anbiyā'* Bani Isra'il) and personages including Abraham, Sarah, Rachel, Isaac, Noah, Jonah, Jacob, Samuel, Benjamin, Solomon, David, John, Mary, and Jesus to figures of particular regional significance like the family, companions, and early followers of the Prophet Muhammad and to Sufi shaykhs and saints (*awliyā'*).

Al-Nabulusi's travels do more than map the sacred landscape of Bilad al-Sham and link it to that of the Hijaz. His crisscrossing itineraries fill in the spaces between holy places, the distance between spiritual weigh stations, and the land between cities and the countryside. In so doing he charts a Syria-specific spiritual geography in which the key cities of Jerusalem and Damascus mirror Hijazi counterparts and in which Palestine and Lebanon form distinct

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21    Bakri Aladdin lists 282 titles written by al-Nabulusi. " 'Abdalgani an-Nabulusi, œuvre, vie, et doctrine," 2 vols. (PhD diss., University of Paris I, 1985). Hibba al-Malih lists 329 in her introduction to her edition of al-Nabulusi's *Jama' al-Asrar fi Radd al-Ta'n 'an al-Sufiyya al-Akhyar Ahl al-Tawajid bi-l-Adhkar* (Damascus: Dar al-Mahabba, n.d.), 17-42.

22    See the works by Alladin and Sirriyeh cited above as well as Barbara von Schlegell, "Sufism in the Ottoman Arab World: Shaykh 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi (d. 1143/1731)," (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997). Akkach, *'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi* is an exception to this trend.

23    Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary*, 128.

24    'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, *al-Haqiqa wa-al-Majaz fi Rihla Bilad al-Sham wa-Misr wa-l-Hijaz*, Riyad 'Abd al-Hamid Murad, ed. (Damascus: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 1989), 37.

spiritual provinces of the larger land as a whole. He does more than this. He recognizes the secular and non-Islamic characteristics and history of the land through meticulous observation and recording exemplified by his observations at Baalbek; he celebrates—mostly in verse—the sensual and aesthetic joy delivered by the topography and the flora and fauna; and he demonstrates respect for the people of the land as sources of information and insight as well as being those who make its bounty possible for city folk like himself.

As indicated above, al-Nabulusi inherited a tradition that viewed Bilad al-Sham as a discrete territory and as a sacred land filled with pilgrimage sites. But al-Nabulusi took traveling in, and travel-writing about, Bilad al-Sham to a new level of intensity. Between 1689 and 1700, al-Nabulusi made four separate trips within Bilad al-Sham that he wrote about. In 1689, he travelled to Baalbek and the Beqaa Valley over the course of fifteen days. Almost immediately on his return he composed *Hullat al-Dhahab al-Ibriz fi Rihlat Ba'labakk wa-l-Biqa' al-'Aziz* (Robes of pure gold and the journey to Baalbek and the Beqaa).[25] Within six months he had departed for Jerusalem for a forty-five-day journey during which he covered most of Palestine and later recorded in the travelogue *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya fi al-Rihlat al-Qudsiyya* (Intimate presence and the Jerusalem journey).[26] In 1693, al-Nabulusi departed on the hajj. Unusually, he travelled north from Damascus as far as Hama before turning west to the Mediterranean coast which he clung to all the way to Egypt where he eventually joined the Egyptian hajj caravan—this at a time when the Damascus caravan was as (if not more) important than the Cairo caravan. On his pilgrimage to Mecca, he spent more than three months travelling through Bilad al-Sham. He returned to Damascus just over a year later and composed has most famous travelogue, *al-Haqiqa wa-l-Majaz fi Rihla Bilad al-Sham wa-Misr wa-l-Hijaz* (Reality and illusion and the journey through Syria, Egypt, and the Hijaz).[27] His last major excursion took place in 1700 CE when he traveled to Tripoli and northern Lebanon. The account of that trip is titled *al-Tuhfa al-Nabulusiyya fi al-Rihla al-Tarabulsiyya* (Al- Nabulus's offering for the Tripoli journey).[28]

In these works, al-Nabulusi recognized Bilad al-Sham as a distinct territory with singular religious significance. He calls it "the abode of the prophets"

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25 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab al-Abriz fi-Rihla Ba'labakk wa-al-Biqa' al-'Aziz* in 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi and Ramadan b. Musa al-'Utayfi, *Rihlatan ila Lubnan*, edited by Salah-Din al-Munajjid and Stefan Wild (Beirut: Orient-Institute, 1979), 55-145.

26 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya fi al-Rihlat al-Qudsiyya*, ed. Akram Hasan al-'Ulabi (Beirut: al-Masadar, 1990).

27 Al-Nabulusi, *al-Haqiqa wa-l-Majaz*.

28 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, *al-Tuhfa al-Nabulusiyya fi al-rihla al-Tarabulsiyya,* Heribert Busse, ed. (Beirut: Orient-Institute, 2003).

(*maskan al-anbiyāʾ*) and evokes both the spiritual dimensions and the temporal boundaries of Bilad al-Sham in the introduction to his account of the trip to Baalbek and the Beqaa in 1689:

> Bilad al-Sham is the most blessed country
>> This is where the righteous prophets
> Are—every one of them—buried
>> But for the ultimate Messenger
> Al-Sham unites what stretches from ʿArish
>> To the bountiful land of the Euphrates
> From Jisr al-Masih
>> It extends lengthwise to Tarsus
> And from Jaffa likewise to Maʿan
>> Thus does al-Sham encompass all this land[29]

Two cities, Jerusalem and Damascus, are the spiritual poles around which the rest of the land orients. That Jerusalem and, by extension, Palestine, are part and parcel of Bilad al-Sham heightens the significance of this land as abode of the prophets. The only land of comparable significance is Bilad al-Hijaz, the cradle of Islam. Al-Nabulusi makes reference to a hadith which names the four cities chosen (*ikhtāra*) by God as Mecca, Medina, Damascus, and Jerusalem.[30] Even more comprehensively, al-Nabulusi opens the travelogue with a reference to prophets in Bilad al-Sham and in the Hijaz as "creating a kind of symmetry and balance" between one land of prophesy and another.[31]

Before setting off on his journeys outside Damascus, al-Nabulusi was in the habit of stopping at three key sites within Damascus itself: 1) the tomb of John inside the Umayyad Mosque; 2) the tomb of Ibn ʿArabi, the Sufi master, in al-Salihiyya north of the city; 3) and, finally, a string of cemeteries outside the city walls where his father and grandfather are buried as well as notable figures in Islamic history including companions of the Prophet such as Bilal b. Ribah, the first *muʾadhin* of Islam, and Sayyida Zaynab, daughter of ʿAli b. Abi Talib; and important men of letters from throughout Islamic history.[32] This ritual tour of his home town serves to presage a greater pilgrimage and also signifies the re-

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29 Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 55.
30 Al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya*, 188.
31 Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab,* 55.
32 References related to this ritual appear in each of the separate travelogues including *Hullat al-Dhahab,* where he mentions visiting the shrine dedicated to the Prophet Yahya b. Zakariyya (John the Baptist in the Christian tradition), 57.

ligious significance of the city. Jerusalem, however, is Bilad al-Sham's most important religious city. It is Palestine's Mecca .[33]

Al-Nabulusi spent ten days in Jerusalem during a forty-five-day trip there and back from Damascus. He visited three or more sites every day and spent hours meeting with the city's considerable population of scholars, Sufis, and other notables. What is most important for our immediate purpose is the connections he draws between Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine. He points to a series of parallels between the cities of Palestine and their counterparts in the Hijaz: Jerusalem is Mecca; Mt. Sinai is the Kaʿba; Hebron is Mt. Arafat; the shrine to Musa near Jericho is the Mina Valley; Nablus is Medina; and Jenin is al-ʿUla, an oasis town to the north of Medina.[34] In a more pedestrian vein he sketches some of the geographical boundaries of Palestine and lists many of its cities. Palestine's borders stretch lengthwise from Rafah to al-Lajjun (near Jenin) and widthwise from Jaffa to Jericho. Its cities include these and Jerusalem, Asqalan, Lidda, Sabsatiyya, Nablus, and Hebron.[35] At one point he notes that the Palestinian village of Sabsatiyya, close to Nablus, is also known as Palestine (Filastin) and wonders:

> Perhaps the reason Sabsatiyya is known as "Palestine" is comparable to the tendency to attach the name of the entirety [of a land] to a portion [of it] as when some people call Damascus "al-Sham." In fact, [al-Sham] extends from the Euphrates to al-ʿArish across and from Maʿan to Mulatiyya lengthwise. Thus, al-Sham is a distinct region (*qaṭr makhṣūṣ*), as is Palestine.[36]

In contrast to common usage today where "al-Sham" refers to the city of Damascus rather than the country as a whole, for al-Nabulusi Damascus is called al-Sham because of its association with the land as a whole.

In addition to Palestine, Lebanon (which al-Nabulusi refers to as the Beqaa, including Mt. Lebanon) encompasses a second notable constituent region within Bilad al-Sham.[37] What is remarkable about al-Nabulusi's itineraries is that he kept going back to Lebanon. Only his trip to Jerusalem did not take him

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33   Al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya*, 20.
34   Al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya*, 20-21.
35   Al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya*, 72.
36   Al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya*, 71.
37   For a more detailed discussion, see Steve Tamari, "The Bible Came from Lebanon: Lebanon in the Spiritual Consciousness of a Seventeenth-century Syrian Traveler," in *Lord of Many Mansions: Essays in Honor of Kamal S. Salibi*, ed. Suleiman Murad (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 2017), 402-421.

through this region. He made two trips exclusively to Lebanon and on his hajj returned to Beirut and Saida and the Lebanese coast and visited Tripoli which he would return to within the decade. On that trip, he revisited the Beqaa and Baalbek and other places he had first encountered a decade earlier. The main reason given by al-Nabulusi himself is that Lebanese regions, especially the Beqaa and the foothills of Mt. Lebanon are chock full—more so than most places—with the remains and eternal spiritual significance of scores of prophets from the times of the Jewish prophets through those associated with Christianity and even more shrines dedicated to Sufi saints, scholars, and figures of local renown from the Islamic period.

Within Bilad al-Sham, the Beqaa occupies a singular position which distinguishes it even from Jerusalem and Damascus:

> Praise be to God who honored the standing of the Beqaa by placing within it the people of elevated stature and refinement... Whomever descends into its loftiness and enters into it will find a fortified refuge. [The valley] ennobles Bilad al-Sham by making it peerless among lands as the resting place for the noble prophets...[38]

For all the prophetic importance of Jerusalem and Palestine and for all of Damascus' prestige as a center of Islamic learning and a touchstone for early Islamic history, the Beqaa emerges in this *riḥla* (which translates as both "journey" and "travelogue") was virtually on par with these two more renowned parts of Bilad al-Sham. It is, for all intents and purposes, the Valley of the Prophets.

Visits to prophets in the Beqaa and its vicinity begin with a stop at the "long tomb" of the prophet Seth, the third son of Adam.[39] After a two-day detour to Baalbek, the group visits tombs of ʿIzz al-Din and al-Rashadi each of whom is called a prophet of God (*nabīy Allah*) by locals and though al-Nabulusi disputes these claims, it does not prevent him from stopping and reciting the *fātiḥa* over each.[40] He also comes across, and prays at, a shrine (*mazār*) to a prophet Ayla who is said to have been the brother of the prophet Yousef b. Yaʿqub (Joseph son of Jacob).[41] On the same day, they come to the tomb of Nuh (Noah) which is as large as that of Seth.[42] From Karak Nuh they travel past the village of Saʿdanaʾil which he marks as being the first village of the

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38    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 55.
39    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 67.
40    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 90.
41    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 90-91.
42    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 92.

Beqaa proper. They stop soon afterwards at Qubb Ilyas where they visit the tomb of the prophet Ilyas (Elijah).[43] Further on, they visit sites on Mt. Lebanon at the edge of the Beqaa Valley dedicated to Dawud (David); ʿUzayr (Ezra), a prophet Zurayq who is said by locals to be a prophet of Israel though al-Nabulusi is doubtful; and a shrine (*maqām*) to Khidr, who appears in the Qurʾan as a guide to Moses and has a long history of popularity in Bilad al-Sham among Christians and Jews as well as among Muslims.[44] In the village of Kifraya, al-Nabulusi learns that the name of the village derives from the prophet Rayya, also a prophet of Israel. On the same day, they come to a place he considers the "heart" (*qalb*) of Mt. Lebanon where there is a tomb to Maryam b. ʿImran, the mother of Jesus. The final site related to prophets that al-Nabulusi visits comes just before he returns to Damascus and visits a tomb said to contain the remains of the daughters of Numays, son of the prophet Seth.

The sheer number of sites devoted to ancient prophets within the limited geographical space that is the Beqaa is remarkable. The distance from Baalbek, as far north as he got, to Kifraya, about the southernmost point on this trip, is a distance of a little over 40 miles and the width of the valley averages about 10 miles. Seth, Noah, Elijah, David, Ezra, and Mary—just to name the most recognizable of them—rest within miles of one another. Only Jerusalem and its environs can boast a higher concentration of sacred sites related to the Abrahamic tradition. Regardless of whether these are, in fact, the sites that al-Nabulusi and his interlocutors think them to be, the belief that they are enhances the status of this small corner of the wide expanse of geographical Syria.

In addition to the placement of tombs of the prophets in the Beqaa, al-Nabulusi also ties sites in the valley and its vicinity to particular places in Syria and beyond, thus magnifying the connectivity between this part of the land and others. Near Baalbek is the village of al-Labwa which is nourished by the spring of Raʾs al-ʿAyn much as, notes al-Nabulusi, al-Rabwa near Damascus is nourished by the waters of the Barada River. The association ties al-Labwa and al-Rabwa together as well as Baalbek and Damascus.[45] Not long after the visit to Baalbek, al-Nabulusi and his party come to the village of Timnin where the cold fresh water reminded him of the village of Manin in the vicinity of Damascus.[46] In both cases, al-Nabulusi was moved to compose poetry on the parallels between the places. That the names rhyme facilitated these associations but there is no reason why poetry—especially if it is recited—cannot work to

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43    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 97.
44    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 103-107.
45    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab,* 78-79.
46    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab,* 90.

establish and accentuate ties that might not have previously existed. In another example of projecting the impression of one place upon another, al-Nabulusi's stop in Mt. Lebanon brings to mind comparisons with Mt. Sinai and Mt. Qasyun.[47] The special status of the Beqaa within geographical Syria rests on the presence of these sacred sites within in. But, one has to wonder, as al-Nabulusi himself did, about the veracity of the claims that these were, in fact, the places they were said to be. Al-Nabulusi approaches this question in two ways which reveal both his worldly knowledge and command of the written record, on the one hand, and his holistic approach to sources of knowledge which value the insights and experiences of the common people on the ground.

Al-Nabulusi had at his disposal a library of works in a variety of genres to help him flesh out the biographical and historical background of the places he visits. As for Noah's tomb, for example, Baydawi's *tafsīr,* or commentary, on the *sūra* of Hud suggests that Noah may have built his ark and landed in India given the kind of wood he is said to have used.[48] He refers to Fayruzabadi's *Qamus* to determine whether there are sources to confirm the burial place of Elijah. That the tombs of David and Mary are located in the Beqaa is doubtful. It is well known, writes al-Nabulusi, that David is buried in Jerusalem although 'Ali b. Abi Bakr al-Harawi (d. 1215), a Persian traveler and writer and one of the founders of the *ziyāra* genre of travel writing, indicates some think he may be buried with Solomon in Bethlehem.[49] Al-Harawi is adamant that Mary is buried in Gehenna outside Jerusalem. There is also a claim that Mary's tomb is in the Sadat neighborhood inside Damascus. Finally, he recounts at length the story of how Mary ended up in Mt. Lebanon according to a text by Yahya b. al-Hasan al-Azduwayli.[50] In the end, he declines to take sides, concluding, "Perhaps the truth rests somewhere in the middle..."[51]

For all his concern with the work of catalogers, biographers, and other mainstays of the written record, al-Nabulusi's views of what is real were not constrained by scholarly tradition. The question of the permissibility of tomb visitation is one that rocked the world of Islam during the period of Kadizadeli reaction. He wrote two treatises defending the practice, a general work titled *Kashf al-Nur 'an Ashab al-Qubur* (Bringing light to friends of tomb visitation) and one focused on the tomb of his spiritual and intellectual inspiration,

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47   Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab,* 103.

48   Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab,* 93.

49   Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab,* 103-104.

50   Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab,* 111.

51   Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab,* 112.

Muhyi al-Din Ibn 'Arabi.[52] Early on in the Beqaa travelogue, he addresses the question of tomb visitation head on. He notes that some say visitation to tombs is forbidden and that there is doubt as to the veracity of the location of particular tombs. But, to al-Nabulusi this is all beside the point: "Indeed there is no certainty as to the designation of any prophet's tomb excepting that of Muhammad. He is buried in Medina about which there is no doubt. He who visits the tomb of a prophet receives a blessing to the extent of the purity of his intentions. Only God knows of the reality of the situation."[53]

The impulse that insists that only God is in a position to judge the intentions of men reveals itself throughout the texts under consideration here. It is especially striking given the intellectual stature of someone like al-Nabulusi because he repeatedly demonstrates his acceptance of the beliefs and practices of common people. This is not to say he has no interest in correcting what he considers a conspicuous error. For example, he offers that the colloquial pronunciation of Baalbek, "Ba'albak" is simply incorrect.[54] On another occasion, he insists that the name of the village Qubb Ilyas is a sign of "corruption [of the language] among the masses (*al-'awāmm*)"; it should be called Qabr Ilyas.[55] These elitist proclivities aside, al-Nabulusi spends much of his time learning from the regular folk in towns and villages and he expresses appreciation of their knowledge and happiness in their company. Just as he is about to enter Baalbek, he expresses thanks to "all those who were with us from among the elites (*al-khāṣṣ*) and the *'āmm*" for the good fortune of being able to find their destinations and to fulfill their goals.[56] He credits reports of natives of Baalbek "who had entered the ancient monuments from childhood through adulthood" with helping him with his meticulous study of the ruins.[57] His heart is warmed by the greetings of the villagers of Qabr Ilyas and he delights in the generosity of group of Bedouin (*'arab*) and in the hospitality of group of Turkmen with whom the party enjoyed an evening of food and drumming.[58]

He depends on the information of locals. He may spend the bulk of his sitting time in the cities with elite and well educated members of the *'ulamā'*.

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52   'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, *Kashf al-Nur 'an Ashab al-Qubur,* ed. Muhammad 'Abd al-Hakim Sharaf Qadiri (Lahore: al-Maktabah al-Nuriyah al-Radwiyah, 1977) and 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, "The hidden secret concerning the shrine of Ibn 'Arabi: a treatise by 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi," trans. P.B. Fenton, *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 24 (1988): 21-50.

53   Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 68-69.

54   Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab,* 79.

55   Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 97.

56   Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 81.

57   Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 85.

58   Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 97, 105.

Certainly, this is the case in cities such as Baalbek, Tripoli, Nablus, and Jerusalem. But, he is not above engaging the people of the countryside and much of his information about shrines, monuments, agriculture, and plant taxonomy come from encounters with villagers and farmers. In ʿAyn Silwan near Jerusalem, he discusses the popular view concerning a presumed connection between this spring and the famous well of Zamzam in Mecca.[59] In Nablus, he and his party are visited by the elite and non-elites.[60] At Mar Taqla, near Maʿlula north of Damascus, he engages people who speak Arabic and Aramaic (and are presumably Christians) and listens to their claims as to the medicinal properties of the local water.[61] In Qunaytra, he meets a group of Turkmen whom he praises for their hospitality.[62] Not only do villagers impress al-Nabulusi with their local expertise but they can also demonstrate the bookish learning that even he is surprised to find is not the exclusive preserve of the urban scholarly elite. On his way to Jerusalem he stopped for the first night after leaving Damascus in the village of Darayya. There he met a group of villagers (*ahl al-balad*) who had memorized the Qurʾan and had read the *tafsīr* of the Jallalan. "Oh my goodness," he remarks, "how many of the people of this village are totally versed in the Qurʾan. It is the same in al-Mazza as well as in other villages in the region of Dimashq al-Sham."[63]

Al-Nabulusi's open-mindedness and nonjudgmental character when it comes to the insights of commoners and to some of their beliefs and practices (some of which he doesn't share) complicates the widely-held image of the *ʿalim* as restricted to an urban environment and the formal trappings of textual learning and established lines for the transmission of knowledge. This down-to-earth attitude toward learning and experience reveals itself in two other dimensions of al-Nabulusi's account of his travels to the Beqaa. One is the enormous interest he takes in the ancient ruins of Baalbek and the second is the deeply sensory character of his delight in nature.

By far the longest single description of any structure or site that al-Nabulusi visits on this journey is that of the ruins at Baalbek. It occupies a full five pages in the edited version of the book, many times more attention than that given to any of the more than forty sites that he visited in the course of that journey.[64] For anyone who has visited Baalbek, this is unremarkable. The craftsmanship, the artistry, the engineering, and, above all else, the scale of the complex is

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59    Al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya*, 188.
60    Al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya*, 329.
61    Al-Nabulusi, *al-Haqiqa wa-l-Majaz*, 98.
62    Al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya*, 49.
63    Al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiya*, 45.
64    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 81-86.

bound to move even the most jaded modern tourist. Historians have, however, characterized Muslim travelers—and al-Nabulusi in particular—as being motivated first and foremost by religious and spiritual concerns and as having little interest in life beyond or before the advent of Islam or the Abrahamic monotheistic tradition.[65] Al-Nabulusi's painstakingly meticulous descriptions of the site involving research in the sources and on-the-scene measurements and interviews with locals challenge the notion that non-Muslim and pre-Islamic sites and empirical observation were of no interest to him or those of his ilk.

Although al-Nabulusi is at a loss to explain who could have built the structures before him, he does not labor the issue of origins. He is more interested in recording what he sees. His descriptions are empirical and precise. He provides measurements for the height of pillars and towers, the length of arcades, the number of stairs, and the width—down to the *shibr* (the length of a hand)—of columns. To confirm these dimensions and to put together as detailed a picture as possible, he crawled up a narrow, dark tower and through a maze of hidden rooms with the aid of candles. He describes decorations of snakes, scorpions, turtles, and statues of men. He observes the destruction that has taken place over the years, some of it attributed to Fakhr al-Din Maʿn's siege of the city during early seventeenth-century wars against the Harfoush and some of it as a result of earthquakes. Al-Nabulusi is quite impressed by what he has witnessed. The monument is "awesome" (*hāʾil*), "great" (*ʿaẓīm*), and "without compare" (*ma laha mathīl*). He concludes his description with two lines of poetry to this effect: "There is in Baalbek something peerless, one of a kind; a monument which all who have witnessed say, 'this building was not built by man.'"[66]

Al-Nabulusi's amazement at the monuments at Baalbek is matched only by the delight he takes in communing with nature. The travelogue is full of poems inspired by the lush environment of the Beqaa and its surroundings. Just as the group is about to settle down in Zabadani for their first night on the road, al-Nabulusi remarks, "The sun danced in the sky disappearing and reappearing as it sunk into the west. It was as if the movement of the sun captivated us as a

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65    Elizabeth Sirriyeh emphasizes the mystical components of al-Nabulusi's travel writing as she argues that he develops a new genre of mystical travel literature, *Sufi Visionary*, 108-128. On the question of interest in pre-Islamic history among Muslim scholars, a compelling intervention is Okasha El-Daly, *Egyptology: The Missing Millennium, Ancient Egypt in Medieval Arabic Writings* (London: University College of London, 2008) in which the author demonstrates the depth of interest in pre-Islamic history—to the extent of deciphering hieroglyphs—among medieval Egyptian Muslim scholars.

66    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 86.

group."⁶⁷ Countless springs, gardens, groves, hills and meadows, and mountain passes likewise captivate him from this point on. Al-Nabulusi's description of the spring at Ra's al-'Ayn outside Baalbek reveals the soul of a man who genuinely delights in camaraderie and the sensual experiences offered by nature:

> Then the huge tent with decorations was brought out for the sake of a more intimate and relaxing ambiance. The tent was set up in a green meadow with a garden full of flowers near a place called Ra's al-'Ayn. We became relaxed and delighted. The waters of the creek glistened and I felt at one with it... I wrote the following lines: 'God watered the valley of Baalbek with Ra's al-'Ayn... Baalbek of the fresh air cleared out hearts... O, Baalbek is there a more flourishing spot in the land?'⁶⁸

About the Beqaa, he writes: "We travelled in the land of the Beqaa contemplating the hills and the lowlands; the vision pleasing to the eyes and the breezes to the ears" and "The Beqaa is the paradise; how wonderful! In these gardens our hearts were lost."⁶⁹ To al-Nabulusi, Mt. Lebanon evokes peculiar charms: "We looked upon Mt. Lebanon and saw it to be great in size and significance. It encompasses flowing waters, trees of all colors at high elevations, all manner of fruits, flowers—common and wild—grape arbors, and a host of other curiosities."⁷⁰

Al-Nabulusi's revelry in the natural beauty of this land led seamlessly to an interest in the fundamentals of agronomy. He composed a book on agriculture titled *'Alam al-Malaha fi 'Ilm al-Filaha* (Signs of beauty and the science of agriculture) which is itself an abridgement of a text by another Damascene scholar, Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Ghazzi al-'Amiri (d. 1529).⁷¹

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67    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 61.

68    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 77.

69    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 95, 96.

70    Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 104.

71    'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, *'Alam al-Malaha fi 'Ilm al-Filaha* (Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadid, 1979). This is an unedited copy of a version originally published in 1882 in Beirut. All references below refer to this edition. There is an edited version which I did not have access to in writing this chapter: 'Abd al-Ghani ibn Isma'il al-Nabulusi, *Kitab 'Alam al-Malaha fi 'Ilm al-Filaha,* edited by 'Adil Muhammad 'Ali al-Shaykh Husayn (Amman: Dar al-Diya, 2001). More biographical and bibliographic information about this text is available at *The Filaha Texts Project: The Arabic Books of Husbandry*: <http://filaha.org/author_al_Nabulusi. html> (accessed August 1, 2018). As of yet there are no published editions of al-Ghazzi's *Jami' Fara'id al-Milaha fi Jawami Fawa'id al-Filaha* (The complete rules for elegance in all the uses of agriculture) but manuscript locations and links to texts, translations, biographies, and bibliographies covering the entire field of *'ilm al-falaha* are available through the *The Filaha Texts Project* at <http://www.filaha.org> (accessed August 1, 2018).

Al-Nabulusi divided his work into eleven chapters. He begins with soils and irrigation and then on to trees, and other plants, dividing them into grains, seeds, vegetables, and aromatic plants before concluding with proper maintenance, means of improving yields, and methods for storage and preservation. Al-Nabulusi explains his reasons for recasting this work for a new generation at the beginning of his abridgement which he composed in 1715:

> When I came across [this] text on agriculture … by … al-Ghazzi al-'Amiri… I was taken by the extent of its usefulness for those who labor to till the land and care for trees… [I decided] it would benefit from an abridgement to include only that which was absolutely necessary for those interested in the subject and to omit that which was not.[72]

Al-Nabulusi thus expresses both his appreciation for the work of agriculturalists and his pragmatic approach to the dissemination of this kind of information.

Both al-Nabulusi and al-Ghazzi were part of a tradition of writing about agriculture in Syria that predated them and continued through the late 18th century. Two of the foundational treatises on agriculture in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern worlds, *The Nabataean Agriculture* and *The Byzantine Agriculture*, were synthesized by the Damascene Mamluk-era writer Muhammad b. Abi Bakr b. Abi Talib al-'Ansari al-Dimashqi (d. 1327), who effectively established a Syrian school of agronomy and may be the anonymous author of a second book on agriculture, *Miftah al-Rahah li-Ahl al-Filaha* (The key of comfort for the people of agriculture).[73] Al-Ghazzi followed Dimashqi by about two hundred years. Al-Ghazzi's text, in turn, was adapted and abridged by a series of successors starting with al-Nabulusi in the early 18th century, Muhammad Ibn Kannan (d. 1740) in mid-century and 'Abd al-Qadir al-Khalasi (fl. 1785) near the end of the century. The existence of a Syrian school of agricultural writing and of the transmission of such knowledge points to a genealogy of learning that is, as it were, deeply rooted in the land itself. One measure of this field's distinctly regional nature is its grounding in the land's climate which reflects a particularly Syrian calendar, known even today as the "Shamsi" calendar.[74] In his treatment of planting and, later in the text, of the care and

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72    Al-Nabulusi, *'Alam al-Malaha*, 11.

73    See *The Filaha Texts Project,* <http://www.filaha.org/author_anon_14c_syrian.html> (accessed August 1, 2018).

74    "Shamsi" as in "sun" (*shams*) rather than "Sham." This calendar comes under many names including "Levantine", "Syrian", "Eastern" (*sharqi*), and "Aramaic." Unlike the "Arabic" calendar which is also a solar calendar, the names of the months derive from the ancient Babylonian calendar. I learned about this calendar from the popular Hashimiyya

harvesting of crops or individual plants and trees al-Nabulusi makes use of the solar calendar (beginning with Kanun al-Thani, Shubat, and so on), which he calls the Syriac (al-Suriyaniyya) calendar. He devotes an entire subsection of one chapter to the four seasons of the solar calendar.[75]

That al-Nabulusi insinuated himself within this body of literature was itself inspired by his travels throughout the land. In the summer of 1700 as he left Beirut for Tripoli, he points directly to the connection between farmers, urban consumers, and the bounty of the land. At the banks of a river,

> [are] gardens where all manner of vegetables are grown including egg-plants, legumes, squash as well as bananas, sugar cane, taro (a root vege-table cultivated for its leaves as well), citrus, and others. All that Damascus imports is available from this area and the great bounty of the fertile banks will last to the end of time... Then we took a path that led to an-other river, al-Antalyas, which empties into the sea and whose waters are pure and, again, along whose banks well maintained gardens and leafy trees grow...[76]

In 1690, while in Jerusalem on his way back to Damascus, he finds an unusual herb near a tomb. His descriptions are those of an observant horticulturalist. The herb was "tall as a finger sporting a green blossom which looks like two hands and four limbs with a small red head topped by a white crest and a tail intricately decorated in red..."[77] He doesn't name this specimen, but he does others such as *al-kalkh* (giant fennel), *al-zanbaq* (iris), jasmine and sesbania, a flowering member of the pea family.[78] He also mentions particular trees such as oak, *al-la'la*, carob, and bitter orange.[79]

To bring this discussion full circle back to the intersection of the intellectual legacy he inherited and then passed on, on the one hand, and the first-hand insights gained from this travels, we can stop with al-Nabulusi in the midst of an eight-day stay in Sidon on his way to Tripoli in 1700. He becomes friendly with the governor, Muhammad Qublan Basha, who acquaints him one evening with a "strange book in a strange style" titled *Nukhba al-Dahr fi 'Aja'ib al-Barr wa-l-Bahr* (The all-time greatest collection of marvels of land and sea) by

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calendars sold in Syria which included the Muslim (*hijrī*) and Shamsi calendars as well as Hijri, Gregorian, and— at least in the 1990s—Hebrew years.

75  Al-Nabulusi, *'Alam al-Malaha*, 184-191.

76  Al-Nabulusi, *al-Tuhfa Nabulusiyya*, 44.

77  Al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya*, 321.

78  Al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya*, 56; *al-Haqiqa wa-l-Majaz*, 180; *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya*, 48.

79  Al-Nabulusi, *Hullat al-Dhahab*, 104; *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya*, 51, 203; and *al-Tuhfa Nabulusiyya*, 77.

Muhammad b. Abi Talib al-Dimashqi, the shaykh of al-Rabwa. This is the same al-Dimashqi who began the "Syrian school" of agronomy four hundred years earlier.[80]

Al-Nabulusi's itineraries of the last decade of the seventeenth century inscribe a web of connections that actually and discursively tie the spiritual, human, and geographical dimensions of Bilad al-Sham into a cohesive and discreet place with layers of meaning and significance for its people. The scholarly legacies he inherited and brought to bear on his writing referred him back to ancient Syrian agronomists, medieval Muslim geographers, and practitioners of the *faḍā'il* and *ziyāra* genres and mark the vertical dimensions of a time-honored understanding of the contours of the land. On the horizontal plane of the places he visited and the people he engaged, his *riḥlāt* serve to shorten the distance between town and country and between elites and non-elites and to narrow the social and cultural gaps that we too often assume to be unbridgeable. That this mystic and bookish religious scholar was so profoundly delighted by the natural beauty and the architectural wonders of his land, accentuates the physical, even sensual, factors that drew him closer to it. The spiritual landscape of the land is brought into sharp relief through al-Nabulusi's perspective. The spiritual treasures of Lebanon and Palestine and of Jerusalem and Damascus as well as the association between parts of Bilad al-Sham with one another tighten the bonds that weave the disparate parts of the land together. Concurrently, al-Nabulusi's observations and writing allow him to construct parallels between the land of al-Sham and the other holiest territory of Islam, the Hijaz, wherein Jerusalem becomes its Mecca.

At a time when nations, like the modern Syrian republic, are crumbling politically, it behooves the modern researcher to look back beyond the nineteenth century and the advent of European influences to more fully appreciate the pre-modern, medieval, even ancient roots of devotion to this land. Shaykh 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi's late seventeenth-century travels and travel writing are but one foray, if a very pronounced one, into the historic link of Syrians to their land.

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